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THE

WITCH-FINDER.

VOL I.

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LONDON:
Printed by A. & R. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.

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THE

WITCH-FINDER;

OR,

THE WISDOM OF OUR ANCESTORS.

A Romance.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THE LOLLARDS," "OTHER TIMES,"

"CALTHORPE," &c.

Ay me! said I within my wearied breast,
And sighed sad, wherefore did God erect
This stage of misery?

DR. H. MORE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR

LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, BROWN, AND GREEN,

PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1824.

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Greenough fund
(3 vols)

By Thomas Gaspey

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PREFACE.

To the period with which the following tale is connected, public attention has recently been drawn. But it appeared to the Author of the Witch-finder, that there were peculiarities which the plans of his abler predecessors did not embrace sufficiently curious to interest. These, scattered before, he has endeavoured to unite and render subservient to the purposes of romance. He has avoided the most prominent events of the time to

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delineate scenes which were the consequences of those events, and the leading characters of that day are left to the historian, while others, less conspicuous, but not less remarkable, are brought before the reader. His chief objects have been to exhibit in action the ideas once general on the subject of witchcraft, and to depict the state to which the drama was reduced when monarchy was no more.

In a work, the primary object of which is amusement, rigid attention to chronology can hardly be deemed important, so that the incidents supposed, are not at variance with the things that were. It would be fatal to the interest of a tale, were facts introduced which could not

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by possibility have occurred. Every one would treat with just derision a novel founded on the transactions of 1660, which allowed the hero the accommodation of *portable gas lights*, and the heroine the advantages of *vaccination*; but the addition of a few months to a long life, and the transfer of certain exploits from an earlier to a later period of the career of the same individual, will, perhaps, be deemed anachronisms too venial to require a formal apology. *The Witch-finder* of the following pages is not known to have infested society quite so long as he is here represented to do, but the history of our jurisprudence records in characters of blood the prevalence of the delusions which enabled

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Matthew Hopkins to flourish down to a much later period.

In the middle ages, the devil was believed to interfere *in propria persona* with the common concerns of mankind, but as refinement advanced, he was supposed to get into the way of acting by deputy; and witches and wizards were entrusted with the management of those affairs which were before under his own immediate superintendence. This persuasion gained ground in England, after many of the greatest minds that ever existed, had shed their light on the land which they ennobled. Age, deformity, and poverty, though it is difficult to imagine that these could be the prizes which Satan would offer to encourage sin, were amongst the

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strongest proofs of guilt. They led to accusation, insured conviction, and were followed by the death of the innocent, amidst the execrations of their fellow-creatures.

It was not by the foolish, the ignorant, or the cruel, that these proceedings were exclusively sanctioned. The wise, the learned, and the humane concurred in the severities inflicted for crimes which it was not possible for human offenders to commit, and the barbarities perpetrated to punish witchcraft, which were not confined to one country, exhibit the most awful instances of perverted intellect to be found in the history of mankind.

In this romance, though the principal

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personages are imaginary, the incidents are generally true. The opinions, topics, of conversation, and amusements of the day, are attempted to be faithfully given. Those who have attended to such matters will find much here which they have seen elsewhere; but the toil which has been bestowed to present in one view circumstances bearing on the same points, which lay widely apart, may, perhaps, be acceptable where it will not surprise, and not unpleasantly remind where it cannot inform.

There are a few things, however, which the Author flatters himself will be new to the public. The kindness of Antiquarian friends has placed in his hands some of the fruits of their more extended re-

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searches, and facts connected with the drama, and with the politics of the day, are given, which, he believes, have never appeared in print. The *Elephant's Bill* or estimate, is genuine, and the mandate alluded to, revoking a permission previously granted for the building of an amphitheatre, he is enabled to give from an exact copy of the document, contributed by a gentleman, whose ancestor had an opportunity of taking it from the original. The "exceptions" mentioned as taken to certain plays are also authentic.

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THE

WITCH-FINDER.

CHAPTER I.

How boldly and how saucily he talk'd!
And how unlike the lump I took him for,
The piece of ignorant dough, he stood up to me!

BEAUMONT and FLETCHER.

ON the right of the town of St. Albans, as the traveller towards London approaches the Abbey, through an ancient gateway a gently sloping path conducts him to the river Ver. Crossing the little wooden bridge thrown over it, he beholds some shapeless masses formed of broad square tiles lying flat in courses about three feet distant from each other,

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the spaces between being filled up with flint and cement. These are the remains of a wall or walls which once encompassed a considerable area. The fragments sometimes form a side or a back to modern sheds; in others they retain not sufficient elevation to be thus made available, and are seen clothed with vegetation and surmounted by bushes. Or rased to the ground, the last effort of the conqueror's insolence exhausted, Roman refinement, which converted the noblest emblem of peace into the most dreaded engine of vengeful war, appears scornfully to have urged the plough over the ruins of the once proud city of Verulam.

Here, at the close of the summer of 1659, a traveller attended by a single servant, rode slowly towards the abbey which bears the name of the first English saint. Though past the prime of life,

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his person exhibited not those indications of decay which entitle their wearer to be called an old man. His countenance was pale; his features were noble and expressive; his eyes dark and bright, but rather sunken; and his whole appearance gave an idea of weariness, which however to a common observer, would have proclaimed itself the offspring of mental toil rather than of bodily fatigue.

He frequently paused to contemplate the interesting vestiges of the ancient city, which were at that period more considerable objects than they are now, after enduring a century and a half's added dilapidation from the hands of the curious, who desire to call a portion of whatever they see their own, impossible as it may be for that portion to furnish any thing like an image of the original from which it is purloined. The individual whom

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we have described, with whatever emotion he might view the traces of a vanished city, manifested no ambition to become the proprietor of so much of Verulam as he could put in his pocket; and his eyes glistened with momentary indignation, when he saw a boy striving to tear down a fragment, the removal of which might enable him to carry away an entire tile.

"Stay your hand, foolish boy!" he exclaimed; "wherefore should it pleasure you to overthrow that, which the lapse of many ages has spared? But it matters not," he added, "go on; destruction is the business of mankind, and you are but learning the trade, which those more advanced than yourself are always endeavouring to teach."

The servant, a short thick-set man, with a countenance which, if it could not always have set wind and weather at defiance,

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might securely do so now, had pressed forward on hearing the voice of his master, and was about to bestow on the urchin some admonition of his own, when the altered tone of the former seemed to satisfy him that his interference was unnecessary, and master and man advanced as before, in silence.

They passed through the gateway, and approached the Woolpack Inn. The landlord presented himself, while the servant, who had jumped from the animal he rode, seized the bridle of the other horse, as his master dismounted.

"Tell me, friend," said the traveller, "if aught has been entrusted to your care within the past hour, for one of the name of Challoner?"

The landlord answered in the negative. A cloud of disappointment lowered over the enquirer's countenance; when a man entered the gateway, bearing a

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wooden case, in which a rose-tree, the blossoms of which were just expanding, had been planted. He drew near Challoner, (that was the name of the traveller,) who remarked somewhat reproachfully,

"You have loitered, or you must have been here before me."

"May it please you, and so I was," the man replied; "but for that you had given me such strict charge of this same flower, I liked not to give it into other hands than your own, wherefore I tarried near the inn till you should come."

"Good fellow!" said Challoner, whose displeasure was now changed to approbation, "I commend thy prudence."

And having bestowed something more than commendation, he took the rose-tree from the man, and passed into the house.

To the kind enquiries which were made as to what refreshment he would choose,

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Challoner only replied by desiring to be shown to a chamber. Conducted to one, he seated himself near the window, and deposited the flower with much care on a table. He drew a chair, seated himself, and his ardent gaze was fixed on the rose. Though his words were few, and not intended to attract notice, the landlord took up the idea that there was something extraordinary about his new inmate. He would gladly have attempted to penetrate the secret which he considered to exist. But this could not be done without drawing the stranger into conversation, and before he had made a regular effort of that sort, their interview was at an end; for on his desiring to know if his honour had any commands, he was answered in a mild but peremptory tone, "None, but that you will leave me to myself."

"Methinks," said he, having grumbled his way down stairs, and joined a party

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who were then engaged at quoits in the yard, "methinks, *roses* must have become the gentlemen's game, instead of *tulips*. My new guest seems to set as great store by the flower which yon fellow brought, as if he expected to make all the money in the world of it, as Master Thorpe once looked to do of those *tulips* with the fine name, which folks say he held to be a fortune, but which after all proved not worth a groat."

"Why, what is he doing with it then?" cried one of the players.

"Don't bawl so loud," the landlord answered. "See you not his window is open, and he will hear that we talk of him. He is doing nothing particular, but his manner is somehow not like that of any other man. But stay, here comes his servant; you shall hear me get it all out of him, and suck his brains as you would an egg, after robbing a hen-roost."

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The man drew near, halted, and looked as if anxious to mark the progress of the game, in which the butcher, the baker, the plasterer, and the blacksmith of the town were engaged. The attention of the worthy master of the inn seemed wholly taken up by it, and that of the rest of the company was really so.

"You shall do well to beat that," cried the baker, who had thrown his quoit with such exactness, that it had ringed the stake, to approach which was the object of their competition.

"Chalk the *hob*, Tom," said the blacksmith, whose turn it was to throw; "or drop a little flour on it from thy doublet, and mayhap I may yet do as good a thing, and make your *ringing the shoe* go for nothing, by a back *edger*."

Nor was the boast a vain one. Though the smith's quoit failed to encircle the *hob* as that of his antagonist did, it fell

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so close that its edge came nearer to the iron. This was apparent to every one but the baker; who denying that his throw had been surpassed, a piece of stick was procured for the purpose of measuring the spaces which intervened between the quoits and the *hob*, at which they had been thrown. The butcher was kneeling down to perform this office, and all present awaited his award in silence, when the voice of Challoner was heard.

"Beautiful object! and sweet as beautiful. O! thou wert happily chosen as the representative of Emma, ere frailty had degraded, and brutality destroyed ——"

The idlers heard these sounds, stared at each other, and for a moment forgot the game.

"Why he's talking to his rose," cried the butcher, and commenced a horse-laugh; when encountering the frown of the stranger's servant, who had remained among the players, he checked his bois-

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terous merriment to utter the remark, "An odd fancy, my masters."

But the first note of his laugh reached the ear of Challoner, and proved the signal for closing the casement. Him they could hear no more, and there was less chance of being heard themselves. But the steady gravity of his man, who calmly met the stare of each in turn, prevented that unrestrained license of speech, in which, but for his presence, they would now have indulged.

The landlord considered it time to make good the promise he had given. He doubted not of being able to engage the man in conversation, though he had failed with the master, and accordingly began with a familiar smile.

"Friend, may I ask you a question?"

"As many as you like. It is my own fault if I answer them."

"Very true, Robert — I think I

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heard your master call you Robert. I see you are a very lively fellow."

"Do you?"

"Yes; and moreover I see you are fond of quoits."

"There you happen to be out. For notwithstanding I have heard my master say it is an ancient game, and though it may be fit for you and your companions, I think it a very stupid sort of exercise."

"Is it so? Nay, then, I marvel you could find amusement in looking on it so long."

"Marry, my noble knight of the bung, here again you are deceived. I have neither sought, nor found amusement in seeing idlers throw one lump of iron at another."

"Nay, but you forget you have tarried for no other purpose but to look."

"I cry you mercy; I but tarried to

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see that you or your hostler did not steal the corn just given to the horses."

The landlord felt ruffled by the speech of Robert, as well as by the laugh which it called forth from the rest of the company, who enjoyed the sarcasm directed against their host, remembering as they did, how confidently he had promised them an entertainment of a different nature, at the expense of the individual by whom he had been so unceremoniously foiled.

"Really, friend," said the innkeeper, "you are merry."

"Really," replied Robert, with portentous gravity, "I am not merry."

"At least, I see you love a joke."

"It is not so; for a joke is the thing which I hate. I aim but at speaking the plain truth. You will not find me one of those who use harsh words, and then say they have no meaning."

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"When he accused you of intending to steal the horse corn," said the butcher, "he meant you no wrong."

"None in the world;" said Robert, not in the slightest degree affected by the waggish sneer which accompanied the butcher's speech. "I spoke but what I thought."

The worthy host began to suspect that he had little to gain from confining the conversation to this topic; and anxious to try his fortune with another, he generously forgot all that was personally offensive, to make new enquiries. He accordingly began: —

"And pray, Mr. Robert, what is your office? for you don't seem like a common servant."

"So my master says, and he does not use to call me his serving man."

"And what then may he call you?"

"He names me his interpreter."

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"His interpreter!" exclaimed the questioner, with surprise. — "O! I suppose you understand many languages."

"Not so; I can only speak English."

"Why, how then can you be an interpreter, I should like to know?"

"Should you indeed! Well then I am content to indulge you. My master, who to say truth is somewhat hasty, at least he is less patient than I am, cannot endure, when I have to report to him what others say, that I should go over the same form of words which they have used, repeating every unmeaning expression which has been uttered, therefore he bids me interpret and give him in brief the substance of what has been said, and to tell at once what the parties mean."

"How! I do not understand."

"Then, to assist the infirmity of your

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comprehension, I will give an example. My master will probably soon ask what has chanced since we arrived here, and I shall describe our conversation."

"And what shall you say of it?"

"The simple truth; thus, 'The ill-favoured knave below;' that you observe is shorter than saying 'Peter Plunder, the fellow who holds the mean hut in which we now rest—'"

"Why, so it is; but it is also—"

"No compliments, if you please; you asked a question, take your answer. 'The ill-favoured knave below,' I shall tell my master, seeing two persons of decent appearance and deportment within his walls, has been trying to draw me into conversation in order to 'suck my brains, and get out your honour's secrets.'"

The landlord was here somewhat disconcerted at finding that his former

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speech had been heard. In his confusion he stammered out an unconnected expostulatory enquiry.

"Why sure — you will not say so — if you do, what — what will your master think? — what will he think?"

"Think! why I suppose he will agree with me in thinking that you suppose him to be a cut-throat, and me no better; and are only considering whether or not you can find a way to hang us both, that you may pocket the blood-money for swearing away our lives."

This speech, which, from any lips but those of Robert, would have seemed uttered in the spirit of careless raillery, was delivered by him with a calm, steadfast look, and quiet reasoning tone, which indicated no disposition to be jocose or insolent. The speaker was, in fact, so much in the habit of saying things which were not calculated to please the hearers

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of them, and it was to him so completely a matter of indifference whether they gave offence or not, that he could pronounce the most formidable censure, without having recourse to that preparatory fierceness of look, which is commonly the precursor of what are called hard words. The effect produced in this instance was the greater from this circumstance; for the person to whom they were addressed could scarcely believe his own ears when they were greeted with such sounds as had assailed them, from one whose manner was as perfectly composed as if he had only been making enquiry after health, or bidding good morrow. Indignation was about to burst through embarrassment, when a loud and deafening shout close to the house, completely drowned the few words which at that moment were too near the end of his tongue to be repressed, and prevented him from pro-

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ceeding with the oration thus commenced. This surprise was increased not a little when a cow, with part of a man's attire (that part which the graceful phraseology of our own times denominates *small-clothes*, or *inexpressibles*,) over her horns and eyes, entered the yard. A crowd of followers rained blows on the poor animal, from the knobbed sticks with which they were armed. Thus tortured, the cow bounded first in one direction and then in another, vainly endeavouring to escape from those behind. Some of these exertions brought her rather rudely in contact with the wondering host, who immediately made his lowest bow, and took his place on the ground. Thence, more frightened than hurt, he was lifted into the house; and just then, the persecutors of the cow were called off, in an authoritative tone, by a middle-aged

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man, who entered the yard foaming with rage, covered with perspiration, and exhibiting, in his actions, the wildness of a bedlamite.

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CHAP. II.

I have some wounds upon me, and they smart
To hear themselves remembered.

SHAKSPEARE.

"THE fun," as it is vulgarly called, of inflicting torture on a noble and unoffending animal, had such attraction for the rabble crew who were occupied in the way described in the last chapter, that they did not pay instant attention to the calls made on them to desist. But the repeated shouts, or, rather, screams of the person who had interfered in behalf of the victim, at length produced the wished-for effect, and the cow was left unmolested in a corner of the yard, to which she had retreated from their violence. The blows ceased before the noise which

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accompanied the advance of the party; and several reproachful addresses bestowed on them, were lost in the tumult which prevailed.

"Fools, fools!" the proprietor of the cow was at length heard to say, after many vain attempts to convey the same epithets to the assembly; "what in the name of the devil are you all at? Whose knavery is this? Speak, you villains, who set you on? Tell me the name of the miscreant."

"An it please you, Master Thorpe," cried one of the rustics, and would have proceeded further if permitted by the party he addressed, who thus interrupted him, —

"Tell me the name, sirrah, and not another syllable."

"I was going to tell you,—"

"You were going to tell me what?" cried Thorpe impetuously, and in a state

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of excitation which made it impossible for him to wait for the information he demanded.

"Why, sir, I was going to say, that we were not set on by nobody but—"

"By nobody but whom?" he vociferated; again interrupting the man at the very moment which might have given the answer he wanted to hear. "Tell me this instant."

"By nobody, sir, but you."

"By nobody but me, villain? Did I set you on?"

"Yes, sir, if you please; you know you did your own self."

"It's false."

"No, sir, don't you say that; because didn't you say the night before last that we must find out who had bewitched the kine?"

"Well, and what then?"

"And then, Master Thorpe, you know

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you said that the great witch-catcher had told you as how we must put a pair of breeches on a cow's horns, and paid me to bring a pair of Dick's old leathers."

"Well, fellow."

"And then you said we must hunt the cow out of the pasture, and she would run full smack to the witch's house."

"Well, fool, but *when*, — *when* did I tell you this was to be done? When, *when*, I say?"

"You said this week."

"But not on a *Thursday*."

"I did not know any thing against it; so because things were now a little out of the way, I told the people to help me to do it."

"My God!" exclaimed Thorpe, speaking to himself, "what an unfortunate thing it is to be surrounded by ignorant people! Who but a set of unreflecting wretches like these could for a moment

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have thought of doing such a thing, of expecting a cow to run to the dwelling of a witch on a Thursday!"

While thus expressing himself he looked disdainfully round on those who had offended him; but the heat of his rage beginning to subside, he was sufficiently himself to observe the stiff awkward bow of recognition which seemed aimed at him by one of the group, whose appearance rather favourably distinguished him from those with whom he was mingled. It was Robert, who thus noticed one whom he had known as the friend of his master.

Thorpe eyed him first indifferently, then curiously, and finally, with interest.

"Robert," he exclaimed, "how is it you are here?"

"Why, I don't know," Robert answered, "except that my master chose to come, and I had not time to get out of

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the way of you and the other mad thing, the cow."

"Of me and the cow!" echoed Thorpe, with a slight indication of returning anger. "I see you have not improved in manners, since you are pleased to make no distinction between me and the cow."

"Oh! but I would have made a distinction," cried Robert, as if willing to repair the error into which he had fallen, "if I had had time, for I have nothing to say against the poor animal."

Soothed by the first part of the sentence, Thorpe commenced an explanatory speech, which saved him from hearing the end of it.

"A business which I have much at heart, has been altogether marred by these dolts. It was my intention — this I wish mentioned to your master, — but stay, he will perhaps afford me an opportunity of telling him myself. Say there-

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fore, that I would fain speak with him, merely reporting what you yourself have seen of me and these fellows, informing him —"

"Am I to tell that they are all fools, and that you are stark mad?" Robert asked, endeavouring to anticipate the substance of what Thorpe wished him to carry to his employer.

"Fellow," said Thorpe, "a cane laid on with a vigorous hand about that knave's cloak would teach your saucy tongue more respect."

"Truly, Master Thorpe," Robert rejoined, "I meditated no disrespect; but since you desired me to report what I had seen, I only wished to know if you would indeed like me to do so."

"Then say to your master this, and no more; that I am here, and covet speech with him."

"If such be your pleasure, come up to

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me," cried Challoner, from the casement which he had again opened; for the unusual tumult had even interrupted his reveries, and having glanced at the crowd below, the appearance of his old friend Thorpe had made him participate in the general surprise. He had not withdrawn from the window when the conversation between that person and Robert reached the point to which it has been brought in the narrative.

Thorpe forthwith accepted the invitation, and repaired to the chamber occupied by Challoner. The crowd dispersed, a portion of them conducting the animal which they had been tormenting, to the place whence it had been brought, divested of the garment which it had preposterously been made to wear.

"I had feared," said Thorpe, "that I should not see you when I found you had sent to Redburn so abruptly for

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the flower. Why, when so near, came you not to visit an old friend?"

"Must I repeat the reasons I have heretofore given? Is it needful that I should again tell, that it is not lack of friendship which causes my absence? But I cannot go where Albert is. Even now I dare not trust myself in his presence. I, however, learn with satisfaction, that he is well, and that he is beloved."

"A finer youth never trod the earth: but he is most inquisitive about you. I have made him understand the many obligations he owes to your benevolence, concealing your real name. This has awakened in him an ardent spirit of gratitude and of impatience to see and to thank his kind preserver."

"It may not be. Though I sometimes am tempted, yet I dare not see him."

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"I cannot choose but marvel," said Thorpe, "at your conduct. You might see him, and yet be as securely protected against any recognition on his part, as though you were a thousand miles asunder."

"This do I know," said Challoner; "I have no dread of his being able to recognise me, but I—I," he added, with emphasis, sighing deeply while he spoke, "I should not fail to recognise him."

"And wherefore should you object to that, seeing you are so largely interested in his fate, that you have protected him from infancy, and even avowed it to be your intention to secure him an independence?"

"My reason, if, indeed, reason have any connection with the course of my thoughts, I cannot explain, without going into horrid particulars — without recurring to circumstances so appalling,

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that many as are the years which have elapsed since they were first deplored, I still shudder to recall them."

Thorpe looked steadfastly on his friend, and paused some moments before he spoke. He at length said, "You have thus mysteriously expressed yourself before. Though you make me fear to press for a disclosure, I cannot but desire it."

"Nor do I blame you. It may well move curiosity to see a man act as I have acted. You, I conclude, have some right to know why I am what you have seen me. Time has given me more firmness than I once possessed; and if opportunity favoured, I would not refuse to satisfy you."

Thorpe advised that he should seize that moment to afford the promised explanation. When Challoner objected to the time and place, he was reminded how

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few the moments had been within the last ten years in which they could freely converse, and that where they now found themselves they were as well defended against impertinent curiosity, as they could be in a private residence. To the latter however Thorpe never ceased to invite him. On other matters Challoner readily conversed, and appeared to enjoy the society of his old friend; but from the one point to which Thorpe desired to lead him, he invariably started, when the enquirer believed all his scruples were at an end. But as they went over the scenes of earlier days, the reluctance of Challoner abated; and at length, prepared by the various topics which had been accidentally started, he yielded to the importunities of Thorpe. After a pause, to arrange the narrative on which he was about to enter, he began.

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"As my thought travels through the recollection of the past, my burning brain glows with unwonted fires, and a confusion rises in my mind which threatens to render unintelligible the effort which I am disposed to make. Often have I resolved on confiding to you the motives by which I am actuated; but I know not even now whether I shall be able to execute my purpose."

"A few moments of reflection will, perhaps, assist you."

"No, reflection will distract. I must hurry forward, and let memory pour forth her burden in unstudied language. Thus it was. — Blest with, I should rather say possessed of, ample means, it was my fortune in youth to behold a female whom I will not attempt to describe; for no description could do justice to the harmony of her countenance,

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or the symmetry of her form. Oh, that her mind had been worthy of them! That it was worthy of them I fondly believed; nor was the belief rashly adopted. I watched her actions with a lover's jealousy, where my presence could not be suspected. I consulted those who knew her best, and who could have no interest in deceiving me; and from all I could observe, from all I could learn, I was led to the conviction that Emma was a paragon of virtue, as she undoubtedly was a model of beauty. This is a very common-place statement. That a woman should be beautiful, seem virtuous, and prove frail, will perhaps appear to you nothing out of the ordinary course of things. I avowed the passion which she had inspired. She modestly receded from my advances, but eventually it was my lot—I once had said my bliss-

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ful lot—to have my love returned; and Emma regarded me as her future husband.

"It was in Ireland, of which country Emma was a native, that I first saw my beautiful and interesting mistress. The death of a relation, which made a considerable addition to my wealth, called for my presence in England. In consequence of this, our nuptials were deferred. I became involved in a maze of legal proceedings, and expecting from day to day to extricate myself, was very unexpectedly detained more than a year, before the business was arranged. Then triumphant over the adversaries with whom I had had to contend, I gaily returned to claim my affianced bride.

"Emma had a female cousin almost as beautiful as herself. She came to England while I was here, and brought me letters from her relation filled with as-

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surances of unchangeable affection. Such I continued to receive during the remainder of my stay. My visits to her cousin were frequent. I delighted to hear her tell of the generous warmth with which Emma had spoken of me in my absence. But after a time she ceased to remind me of that which had charmed me. I judged that she grew weary of the subject from repetition. But before her return to the sister kingdom, which preceded mine by a month, she threw out some ambiguous hints on the fickleness of her relation. These I little heeded, for the communications which reached me direct from Emma, assured me of her constancy, and I was all impatience to claim my fair prize.

"I arrived in the barony of Munterlong, in the county of Tyrone, towards the close of October, 1641. I approached the dwelling in which I believed Emma

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to repose, lovely and innocent as when I last beheld her. Her relation, whom I have mentioned as having been in England, received me as I entered. Her manner was disordered — she started at recognising me, and trembled violently while her hand was clasped in mine. I asked for Emma; she was silent. Alarmed, I demanded to know if she were ill — if dead? My fears were abated to hear that she was in good health.

"'Tell me,' I demanded, 'tell me, what then has occurred?'

"She still trembled, but made no reply. I could not bear this torturing delay, and impetuously rose to seek for the explanation which was thus withheld.

"'Madman, hold!' exclaimed Sophia, (I am not sure that I named her before,) with an effort which surprised me; and she resolutely interposed her slender form between me and the door, at the same time

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extending her arms to prevent my going forth.

"'What would you?' she demanded, in a tone which combined tenderness with extreme apprehension.

"'I would terminate this torturing suspense,' I replied.

"'Alas!' she answered with a sigh, 'it is my grief to know that it cannot long be protracted. While in England, you may remember I spoke of the fickleness of my relation.'

"'I remember it, but —'

"'But you thought I was in error,' said Sophia. 'It was not so. I wished but to prepare you for that which could not be concealed on your return.'

"Speechless and powerless I glared wildly on the speaker, while she proceeded with the brief but dreadful narrative which destroyed my peace. The substance of it was this, that Emma, alike

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forgetful of her lover and her fame, had become a mother.

"I will not dwell upon the excruciating tortures which I endured, while these miserable tidings were communicated. But suddenly it occurred to me, that possibly the statement was untrue. It was a strange idea, and I retained just reflection enough to be sensible of it at the time. I however thought that nothing short of positive proof ought to convince me that Emma was really what she had been described to be, and as soon as I could give utterance to my thoughts, I expressed this feeling. It was applauded by my informant.

"'You act,' said she, 'like the generous lover you have ever been. She is at present in this house, and a few moments will give you the mournful satisfaction you require. You will find her now with her babe. But stay — to you it can hardly

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be expected that she will acknowledge her real situation.'

"'Nay, nay,' I replied, 'I will not assume that Emma is degraded on the report of any created being.'

"'She will speak the truth to you,' Sophia answered, 'provided she knows you not. Here is a mask. Wear it. Present yourself before her, and demand of her authoritatively if the child which you will find in her arms be hers. Her answer will be sufficient.'

"To this suggestion, a happy one I deemed it, I offered no objection. The mask which so opportunely presented itself, I immediately used, and hastened to the chamber in which Emma rested. As I approached, I heard a voice which I instantly knew to be hers, fondly soothing an infant. Frantic with grief and indignation, I could not seek for the fastening of the door, but burst it open and stood before her.

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"She shrieked at my sudden intrusion —I saw an infant clasped in her arms, while the mother though much alarmed, still retained all that dazzling beauty which in other moments I had loved to contemplate as that which was to consummate my happiness. So young — so fair — so angelic was her appearance, that even then I doubted; but I recalled the part which I had to act, and sternly enquired —

"'Whose child is that?'

"Emma hesitated. 'It is — it is —' she said, and her tongue withheld further speech.

"'It cannot be yours!' I exclaimed in the same tone which I had before adopted, and I offered to advance.

"'It is mine — it is mine,' was her answer. Oh never, while life still lingers in this fading frame, shall I forget the matchless horror of that moment! I could

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think of concealment no longer. The mask fell from my face, and I was recognised. Emma instantly sprang towards me with open arms, while mad exultation flashed in her eyes as she addressed me.

"'Challoner — my Challoner! God be praised that you are come. Now I have no more to dread.'

"The unhappy one seemed actually to rejoice that her falsehood had been made known.

"'Lost, wretched Emma!' were the only words which I could utter while I receded from her. She followed not. The sense of degradation seemed in that moment to overcome her, and before I could attempt to assist her, she sunk on the floor, endeavouring as she fell, with maternal tenderness, to save her infant from the shock.

"With humane care Sophia flew to the

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succour of her relation. I had lifted Emma into a chair, when the countenance of the infant attracted my notice. The resemblance of its mother, which I traced, was more than I could endure. I left the apartment, rushed out of the house, and wandered, dark as it was, I knew not, cared not whither, raving like a maniac, or rather having become one.

"You cannot have forgotten the events written in characters of blood, which connect themselves with the history of the period to which I now refer. Misgovernment had produced disaffection,—disaffection led to increased severity, and increased severity had goaded the sufferers to madness; under the influence of which they perpetrated outrages of the most appalling character, which I will not recall, and which humanity would veil for ever.

"Early in the morning which suc-

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ceeded that miserable night, it was my lot to cross a plain on which some of the victims to the blind rage excited, had breathed their last. I looked on their mangled remains with feelings of horror and of commiseration, which were strangely mingled with those of envy. I envied the sufferers the repose of death, while I shuddered for the dreadful guilt which had given them that repose. Turning from the awful spectacle, I was leaving the spot, when I thought I heard the cry of an infant. The sound was repeated. At a short distance I saw a child feebly struggling by the side of its lifeless parent. What were my feelings when I perceived that the babe was the same which I had found in Emma's arms, and when, though frightfully disfigured and altered by death, I distinguished in the features of the corpse those of Emma herself! I first

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fled in dismay, and resolved that the evidence of her shame should perish with her form. But Pity bade me return to save the infant. Pity spoke a second time, and told me that true compassion would leave it to its fate, rather than preserve it to be exposed to misery in mature life, like that which I at that moment endured, and again I withdrew. Further reflection made me once more return. To leave the guiltless offspring of a dead mother miserably to languish, seemed an act of vengeance ferocious and unmanly. I took the child in my arms, and with much difficulty succeeded in conveying him safely to Dublin, whence I brought him to England.

"There was another act of weakness which I committed at the same time, but that was unimportant, and I shall not further weary you by repeating it now. I have stated that which on reflection

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will I think, appear a sufficient explanation of my conduct. I know not to what madness I might be wrought if I suffered myself to know this youth, whom during my absence, on account of the civil wars, I confided to your care. To have before me the living semblance of Emma's features, at once the evidence and the offspring of that frailty which I must ever deplore, would, perhaps, tempt me to revenge on the innocent the guilt so awfully expiated in his mother's death, and induce me to abandon the resolution I have made to support the life which (perhaps it was an act of criminal folly) I formerly preserved."

"For that," said Thorpe, "I think you need have no misgivings. To know Albert, such as he has become, must yield joy, and satisfy you that your humanity was not exerted in vain."

"If the youth be such as you paint

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him, I shall, perhaps, still regret that to me he will owe the misery which is probably in store for him; but in any case I cannot consent to see him. My philosophy, ay, and my reason too, are soon shaken; so press me not to go to your house."

"But Albert is now in London. You may therefore come and visit my dame. Trust me, she will be joyed to see you after so long an absence; and I in my turn have much to tell which will surprise."

The look and tone of Thorpe were such as indicated that he had something of deep interest to communicate, and recalling with some degree of curiosity the manner in which he had presented himself in the Inn-yard, Challoner consented, on being again assured that Albert was not at his home, to pass one night under his roof.

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CHAP. III.

These flowers, which are of no further use than to ornament gardens, which are exceeded in beauty by many other plants, and whose duration is short and very precarious, became in the middle of the seventeenth century the object of a trade such as is not to be met with in the history of commerce, and by which their price rose above that of the most precious metals.

BECKMANN's *History of Inventions.*

A SHORT time sufficed to effect the proposed adjournment from St. Alban's to Redburn. Challoner received the welcomes, and briefly answered the enquiries of Mrs. Thorpe, and partook, though but sparingly, of the hospitable fare set before him.

Mrs. Thorpe was a good housewife, and her arrangements were so well made for the accommodation of her family and guests, that Challoner, though but little accustomed to indulge

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in comment on such matters, noticed them with satisfaction, but he thought a compliment on the subject too commonplace to be worth uttering.

Persons who are conscious of any deficiency or falling off, are very apt to suppose that what they feel rather tender about, attracts the eye of every one. Such was the case with Mr. Thorpe, who, when Challoner looked round with approbation, suspected it was remarked that his house was different, and in the wrong way from what it had once been.

"Alas! Master Challoner," said he, "I clearly perceive that you discern my affairs are no longer as they were, when you formerly visited me."

"Really, it seems to me that every thing is in better taste than formerly;—that if there is less splendour, there is more comfort; and men at our time of life have lived to but little purpose if

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they cannot enjoy themselves without ostentation."

"This I have tried to teach myself, and I believe I should have succeeded, had not hell itself been leagued against me."

Challoner seemed to disapprove of the warmth of Thorpe. "You are not choice in your language," said he; "though no puritan, I do not admire the free and familiar likening of objects or persons to that which is not of earth."

Thorpe answered with great solemnity, "It is not my practice to do the thing which you justly reprehend. I speak not in tropes, nor do I idly use words of awful import. What I have said is severely true. With bitterness of soul I repeat it, I am the victim of a horrid confederacy with hell."

Challoner turned his enquiring eye on Thorpe, with astonishment which no language can embody. He scrutinised the

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face of his friend as if he expected to find in its expression some evidence of insanity.

"You doubt the truth of my assertion," said Thorpe, "and perhaps you are one of those who incline to deny that practices like those which have all but destroyed me are common. Unhappily, I have proofs but too convincing of their deadly power; and to their frequent occurrence numbers, even in this neighbourhoood, can testify."

"I do not know that I understand you," said Challoner. "But you seem to speak of things respecting which I can hardly say I doubt, so strongly does my scepticism urge me to deny."

"Check the presumptuous movement in your bosom, at least till you have heard some particulars of my mournful story. These shall be yours in brief. You

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remember me originally a bookseller in a pretty way in Little Britain. Anon you saw me become a gallant merchant, holding a noble house, with a fair garden, opposite the Three Daggers, in Fleet-street, with servants and horses at my command."

"True; and it surprised me as much as it pleasured me to witness so mighty a change in your circumstances on a sudden."

"This shall be explained. It was in the year of our salvation one thousand and six hundred thirty and six, that the trade in *tulips* began."

"I remember that strange mania."

"I," said Thorpe, "was one of those who engaged in it, and for a season, with marvellous success. Hence my affluence. I nothing doubted but it would continue. Without seeing the tulips I bought, I sold them again with advantage to others, who, speculating on a variation

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in their value, purposed doing the same. I prospered for a time, when it was my lot to experience some miscarriages. On one occasion I had purchased ten *Viceroys*, on terms so favourable that all my friends envied my good fortune, and predicted that I should gain much wealth. I had given for them but nine hundred pounds."

"But nine hundred pounds!" cried Challoner. "Is it possible that you could be so insane as to give such a sum for ten miserable tulips?"

"Understand me aright. It was not to possess the flowers themselves that I gave this money, but merely to have the opportunity of disposing of them as merchandise."

"Is it then possible that paying a price so enormously, so ridiculously high, you could look to gain by them?"

"Nay, the very same things had been

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sold in the Low Countries, but a short time before, at the rate of three thousand florins per root; their average weight being not more than three hundred and sixty *perits*. Now mine were to weigh, one with another, not less than three hundred and ninety *perits*. I calculated on getting a larger price than that which I have named; when suddenly news came that at Rotterdam a supply of *Viceroys* had been received, superior to mine, which had been publicly sold at so low a price as eighteen hundred florins each. Their value instantly declined in England, and mine were disposed of at a loss."

"And no great wonder, methinks. Is this one of the proofs of the hellish confederacy which you have mentioned?"

"You shall hear.—After this disappointment, it struck me that the merchant who really possessed the roots which were most in request had a great advantage

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over other speculators. Full of this idea, I passed over to the Continent, visited all the tulip marts to learn the current prices, and rich in information of this sort, arrived at Vienna, just at the moment when four *Semper Augustuses* and seven *Admiral Liefkens*, the property of a Dutch trader who had deceased, were offered for sale by his creditors, who were ignorant of the great value of this property. For eighteen thousand florins, I got the whole of them."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Challoner, with new surprise; "you, who knew the *true value* of these flowers, got them from the ignorant people who had them to sell, on paying *only* eighteen thousand florins. What a bargain!"

"It was an immense piece of good fortune; so every one thought; and I overjoyed, brought my prize to England. I prudently concealed, for a time, the

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extent of my wealth, and only exhibited one *Semper Augustus* for sale. It was a native of Syria, had been carried to Constantinople, and there purchased by the Dutchman who conveyed it to Vienna. A short time before, such was the rarity of the *Semper Augustus*, that a single root was sold at Amsterdam for four thousand six hundred florins, a carriage, and a pair of grey horses, with harness complete. Mine was a perfect beauty. Its leaves delicately varied; its petals pale and exquisitely formed, commanded universal admiration. It, however, sold but for forty pounds."

"Really! Well, that was no small profit. But could you part with the rest of your stock in the same manner?"

"I sold the others at the same rate. But mark what followed. The price rapidly declined, and when I should have received the money for which they had

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been sold, the purchasers returned me the flowers, paying only the difference between what I had sold them for, and what they were, at the time of their being returned, considered to be worth."

"That could not hurt you, as they were still saleable, for the remainder of what you had expected would be paid for them."

"But none wished actually to possess the roots, so that I could only part with them at a great disadvantage. This I could not make up my mind to encounter. Who, for instance, would have thought of selling a *Semper Augustus* for twenty pounds, or an *Admiral* for eighteen?"

"Indeed I cannot say. I do not think I should have had any idea of doing so."

"Nor could I reconcile myself to it," said Thorpe; "I therefore determined to

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keep them myself till a scarcity should occur, when I doubted not of getting what would console me for all the time and care I had bestowed. I had kept them for three years, when two of each sort died in the same season. I was then reminded that a female who wore a mask, supposed to be coming from the play at Blackfriars, had, a short time before, looked in upon my garden, and on hearing me speak of their value, she used these words, 'Presently they will not be worth sixpence.'"

"And what importance can you attach to that?"

"I thought lightly of it. This was in the year forty. It was about two years afterwards that you requested me to take charge of the education of Albert. One day when I chanced to be walking with him in the garden, a labourer pointed to a somewhat fantastically at-

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tired female, whom he said he verily believed was the same, judging from her figure, for he saw not her face before, that had withered my tulips."

"How know you that she withered them?"

"Circumstances prove it; for within the brief space of six months from that day, the day on which I saw her, all the others were destroyed. Some well-meaning people desirous of tranquillising my mind, would fain have persuaded me that they had been thrown down by the cats, and two Albert was said to have torn up by the roots; but from the manner in which they withered, all as it were together, and from the look which the female gave when she next crossed my way, I have no doubt that they were blasted by witchcraft."

"By witchcraft!" echoed Challoner, with an incredulous smile. "Because a

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few tulip roots died in your garden, do you suppose the mischief must have been caused by witchcraft?"

"Not on that account alone, though I confess that circumstance awoke suspicion. Hear the rest of my tale. Much impoverished by the loss I had sustained, and worn out by the harassing speculations (speculations similar in object and misfortune to those just described) in which I had been engaged for several years, I determined on seeking humble comfort by retiring to a cottage in the country. I settled here in Hertfordshire, and became a farmer. Strange to tell, in the first three years my crops all failed."

"That was unfortunate."

"I thought so, and that was all I thought about it; when one day I met, and within fifty yards of a field of corn which had just been cut, the same female I have mentioned. Her gaze was fixed

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on mine as it had formerly been; and though she spoke not, I could see in her eye a glance of exultation that my corn had been marred by her infernal arts as my tulips had been before."

"It was certainly singular that chance should have conducted her steps in the same direction which yours had taken."

"If you hold that to be extraordinary, what will you say when I add that ten years afterwards I met her nearly two hundred miles distant from this spot?"

"The coincidence was remarkable. Where did you again encounter her?"

"At York. Thither had I sent Albert with my own son for education, and just before I took them through the Netherlands and France, respecting which you were informed by letter, I went to the school, and there did I see the witch again."

"You saw this same woman?"

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"Nay, what but a witch can she be who would thus follow the man she designed to injure? I told you of my ill success here at the first, but after awhile, hearing perchance that I was resolved to subject her to all the penalties of law, she fled. Then my crops fared as well, aye better, than those of my neighbours, even to the year when I met the horrid hag again at York. That season the return was scanty, but the very next year her malice began to show itself in all its former virulence. Much of the hay rotted on the ground by wet; and one stack when I thought it safe in the yard took fire, no mortal in the place could tell how; while the wheat became black in the ear before it had been touched by the sickle."

"But such varieties of seasons, and such miscarriages as you deplore, may arise from natural causes, and prove not

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that you are beset with witches, of whose very existence I confess myself much in doubt."

"This is strange, but Albert is just the same. I know that the seasons may be expected to vary, and that thence no rash judgment ought to be drawn to the injury of any one; but allow me to remark the repeated failures which I have known ever follow the destroying presence of the wretch I have described, amount to something more than what could be expected from chance, in the ordinary course of events."

"But for events over which no mortal can have control, as it appears to me, you ought to be slow to bring forward a charge against a fellow-creature, which, if credited, would probably affect her life."

"If such wretches had twenty lives," cried Mrs. Thorpe, who till now had

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taken no part in the conversation, "they ought to lose them all."

"I ought to have told you," said Thorpe, "that no sooner had I lately returned to my own home, than the witch by her diabolical art found it out, and came here again, with another or two of the same sort. I knew what would follow. The crops are again failing; a cow died last week, and all my swine went mad the day before yesterday, so that I was obliged to have them killed and buried."

"This was told to me when I asked after your welfare, as I passed through this morning; but your butcher, who was by at the time, laughed heartily at the tale, and said your swine had been suffered to feed on the grouts or bottoms of your ale, which had somewhat disordered them, and led you to believe

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that they were mad, when the truth was they were intoxicated."

"I know *he* said the pigs were drunk, but I understood what was the matter before I sent for him, and am quite satisfied that they were bewitched by that—"

Here Thorpe paused in his speech to search his mind for some novelty in the way of reprobation, having exhausted the varieties of witch, wretch, and hag.

"That devil incarnate, I was going to say, God forgive me," cried Mrs. Thorpe, with an elevation of tone which seemed to exult in the energetic finish, thus supplied to her husband's speech, "for I am sure she is no better, and if I had my will she should not continue her pranks long."

"It is quite natural Madam for you to feel indignant, considering yourself to be so much aggrieved."

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"O, no, by your favour master Challoner," replied the lady, "it requires no consideration."

Dame Thorpe having conceived a great horror for the crime of witchcraft, judged no punishment could be too severe for those who were guilty of it; and with that warmth which ladies sometimes make the companion of their likings and dislikings, it appeared to her that to doubt the guilt of a person accused would be something like a concession in favour of the crime. Such being her feeling, the colloquy proceeded as follows: —

"It may require no consideration, Madam, to determine the character of the imputed crime; but much may be necessary to decide the question whether the party accused be criminal."

"Criminal! is it not criminal to drive

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people's cattle mad, and to blast their corn as it grows?"

"But this, as it appears to me, is only suspected."

"Is it not criminal to bewitch poor children?"

"Undoubtedly Madam; but,—"

"Is it not criminal in these fiends to take the newly-buried corpse of an infant from the consecrated ground in which its friends desired that it should rest, to make an ointment to anoint their own wicked limbs withal, that they may be the more lightsome to move with ease on their broomsticks to do the devil's bidding?"

"I never meant to say one word in favour of such practices, but what I would remark is this—"

"Is it not criminal to get themselves baptised in the devil's name, allowing their faces to be marked with the tip of

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his tail, and then to go and feast, and dance, and sing wicked songs at his ugly suppers?"

"This would be horrible if—"

"And is it not criminal to carry away the roofs of people's houses; to knock down stacks of chimneys, and break all the windows in a godly man's house?"

"Unquestionably, if it could be proved that any human being—"

"And is it not criminal to give suck to a toad or some other shocking thing, which the devil sends to be their familiar, as if it were their own lawfully born offspring? O the wretches! they ought to be burned to death by a slow fire!"

"But first, Madam, methinks—"

"O, Sir, I would show them no mercy. You, Mr. Challoner, I have always known to be a very good man; but people who live at a distance from

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the haunts of these wretches, have no idea of their horrid doings; and were you but acquainted with half as much as I know of them, you would agree with me, I am sure in thinking that since they will sell themselves to the devil, they ought to be sent as quickly as possible to their master's home."

Mrs. Thorpe's eloquence was too much for Challoner; he saw that in her zeal to visit the crime she could not pause to enquire whether an individual charged with that crime was accused on sufficient grounds. In her eyes, the magnitude of the sin was enough to cover all deficiencies of proof, and perceiving this, he was willing to close the conversation. With that view he now remarked,—

"I cannot contend against you Madam; when you prove any individual to have committed the acts you have

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enumerated, I shall probably approve of the punishment which you will inflict. But beware that you do not pursue the innocent."

The lady re-commenced in her former strain: "Innocent! I do not call those innocent, who engage in such concerns; are they innocent who —"

Here she had the misfortune to be interrupted by Thorpe, who was eager to answer what had last fallen from Challoner.

"I," said he, "am as anxious that none but the really guilty should suffer as you can be; and you, my old friend, have a proof of it, in what you have seen this day. Finding that the evil became intolerable from the great prevalence of witchcraft, I determined on making forthwith the requisite search and enquiry for the guilty; and therefore being resolved not to spare expence in a case

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of so much importance, I invited the renowned witch-finder, Master Matthew Hopkins, to visit Hertfordshire. He could not come on the instant, but he very kindly gave me directions how I should proceed in his absence to find in what direction the witch lay. Here is his letter."

Challoner received the paper, and read the following lines, to which his attention was particularly directed by Thorpe.

"Put a pair of breeches on a cow's head, and beate hir out of the pasture with a good cudgell, upon a Fridaie, and she will run right to the witche's door, and strike thereat with hir hornes."

"Well", said Challoner, "you have tried this experiment."

"See you not," said Thorpe, "it has not been done, inasmuch as it has not been tried on a Friday? On that ac-

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count it cannot be held to be tried at all. This it was that exasperated me against the boobies who undertook the business to-day; for stands it not to reason that that ceremony, which could only be efficacious on a Friday, can be of no avail if had recourse to earlier in the week?"

"That I cannot doubt, if indeed there be any ceremony which is only efficacious on a Friday. But really friend Thorpe, I think you are somewhat misled in this. That wretches may be abandoned enough to injure cattle wantonly, and commit other outrages which are distinct from ordinary depredations, I can easily credit; but that any mortal possesses powers like those which you believe the party whom you have mentioned to exercise, seems to me most unlikely. There have been, I know, individuals who affected to communicate with the inhabitants of another world, but this I be-

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lieve was for purposes of fraud, to win money from the credulous, who would not otherwise be worked upon."

"And so you do not believe in witches?"

"Not believe in witches!" echoed Mrs. Thorpe; "Not believe in witches!" she cried, repeating the exclamation with a stare and tone which surprise, incredulity, and horror united to furnish and sustain. "Why, I should as soon have thought, Mr. Challoner, to have found that you had turned atheist. Do we not read even in Scripture of witches?"

Then man and wife poured forth a flood of eloquence, to prove that it was probable the reality of what they had asserted had existence. Their reasoning was backed by a series of relations of most unquestionable authority, which, in their judgment, left no excuse for doubt, and would have made denial perfectly absurd.

After the sample which Challoner

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had had of Mrs. Thorpe's powers, he was not intrepid enough to venture on a formal answer to what she now advanced; but without risking their displeasure by positive contradiction, he took a course which he had sometimes found very useful in cases where the marvellous had been roundly asserted.

"You tell me," said he, "that all these strange tales are certainly true, and that nothing is more common than supernatural interference with human affairs. Allow me to ask, if you yourself have ever seen any of those agents which you describe the devil to be in the habit of sending to assist mortals who are supposed to become his willing agents? Have *you*, as they are so constantly abroad, chanced to see any of them?"

The answer to this, he securely calculated, would furnish grounds for postponing at least, the yielding of implicit credit

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to the wonders which he had listened to, and he was rather startled when Thorpe unhesitatingly replied —

"Assuredly I have. Many of their horrid familiars have come in my way. The horse-shoe at the door, it is true, prevents them from entering my dwelling, but its influence extends no further, and cannot restrain them from crossing my path, when I venture abroad. Since you are so hard to be convinced by my words, if you can credit the testimony of your own senses, you may, if you will, see a witch's familiars this night."

"Indeed!"

"If some hour or two after nightfall you will accompany me, your doubts will be set at rest for ever."

"I am anxious to reach London without delay, and therefore proposed retiring to bed betimes, that I might be prepared to journey early in the morning. But

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my curiosity is somewhat moved by your proposal; and to be resolved on a point so interesting, I will remain here this night, if you can rely on the absence of Albert."

For this Thorpe readily engaged. His partner much rejoiced that their sceptical friend was in so fair a way of having that disbelief, which she could not but regard as sinful, done away; and conversation on the various topics which their present situation and recollections of former days suggested, made time pass rapidly, till the abbey clock struck ten, by which hour, Mr. Thorpe supposed the imps of darkness would fancy themselves secure, and be found, in all probability, in the midst of their nocturnal gambols. He accordingly proposed that they should venture forth on their witch, or rather imp-seeking expedition.

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CHAP. IV.

The heavenly Father keep his brood
From foul infection of so great a vice.

FAIRFAX.

HAVING retraced their steps, and again reached St. Alban's, they walked in silence to the end of the northern transept of the abbey, when Thorpe halted and addressed Challoner.

"You, perhaps, think me rash in seeking the horrid creatures which I have said you may view. I am not certain that we should be safe, had not a pious and learned person, lineally descended from the celebrated traveller Sir John Mandeville, who was a native of these parts, communicated to me a most rare and worthy secret which his great ancestor is said to have obtained in Jerusalem, when he journeyed thither, as was the custom

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in the time of his earthly pilgrimage. The possession of this has hitherto defended my person, which otherwise I doubt not would have suffered from the same damnable arts which have so repeatedly assailed my property."

"And what did this pious person tell?"

"He counselled me, whenever my affairs should call me forth after nightfall, to carry in my hand a small portion of dust taken from the grave of Joseph of Arimathea, which distributed over my garments should serve as armour, and effectually repel all assaults from the emissaries of Satan."

"The secret may be invaluable, but unless he provided you with a sample of the earth in question, I know not how you could profit by it, as you say you have done."

"Only by repairing hither," said Thorpe. "The spot on which we now

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stand contains the ashes of Joseph, who, coming to England, repaired to this city, and contributed to establish the Christian religion among the ancient Britons."

"This I never heard before."

"The fact is of undoubted verity, as the records of the Monks of Glastonbury will prove."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Challoner. "Really I cannot but marvel at the change I remark in you. Heretofore I have heard you stoutly inveigh against the monks and their records, as parts of a system of imposture and impiety, which merited but abhorrence and derision."

"Nor have my opinions with respect to monks and papists undergone any change. But I am not so bigoted as to disbelieve my own senses, because what I see is sanctioned by ancient writings which are in their keeping. Since Beelzebub has of late made unwonted efforts to

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ensnare and persecute poor mortals, I am not amazed that "HE, whose name is Wonderful," has provided adequate means for the defence of the sufferers; and if it were permitted for us to reason on the way in which this might best be accomplished, where should we more naturally suppose the means of resisting the tempter would be found than in the graves of those departed Christians, who lived but to oppose the extension of Satan's dominion."

"I cannot speculate on probabilities of this sort; but let us forward."

"First, take a handful of earth from the grave, as a measure of precaution."

"I have a trusty oaken stick in my hand, which I think will suffice for my protection."

Thorpe remonstrated against the imprudence, not to say the presumption, of his companion, in thus refusing the security which might be obtained by merely

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stooping; but expressed his hope, as they resumed their march, that what he himself had taken from the resting-place of Joseph of Arimathea would save both from harm. Challoner, as it seemed to Thorpe, concurred with him in this idea, as he declared it to be his opinion that the earth in question was quite as capable of protecting two as one.

They passed round the western extremity of the cathedral, and descended by that path which Challoner and Robert had traversed towards the ruins of Verulam. They went over the spot where Alban, said to have been an eminent citizen of that place, was supposed to have received Amphibolus, who converted him to Christianity and qualified him for the honours of martyrdom, which he eventually received from the persecuting care of Dioclesian; and then, having gained a rather elevated spot, Thorpe announced,

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in a solemn whisper, that they had only a little field to cross to reach the residence of the witch. While he spoke he pointed to a lonely cottage, imperfectly seen from the darkness of the night, but which appeared to Challoner situated in the midst of a woody enclosure.

On gaining this view of the place of their destination they paused; but at the instance of Thorpe again moved forward. He enjoined the most perfect silence as they approached the cottage, though at the same time he remarked, he had no doubt that it would prove useless, as the witch would not fail to be informed by her familiars that strangers were near. He was thus speaking in a very low tone, when a cock was heard to crow.

"There," said he, still whispering, "did I not tell you how it would be?"

"What mean you?" demanded Challoner.

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"How!" cried Thorpe—"heard you not that cock crow! Nay, since you heard it not, can anything more distinctly show that the voice was that of no native of earth, or why should it be audible to me and not to you?"

"I heard it. If I expressed surprise, it was at your seeming to attach importance to a thing so singularly trifling."

"Surely you must know that this is not the time when such sounds could be heard in the natural course of things. Is not the cock named the herald of the morn? yet now it crows in the darkness of night."

"Though the bird you mention is commonly, and not inappropriately, called the herald of the morn, it is no uncommon thing for its voice to be heard at other seasons. I have often heard it after night-fall."

"But never under ordinary circum-

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stances. It commonly betokens death to some one in whose vicinity it is heard."

"In this instance, then, it may intimate the death of the female you suppose to be a witch."

"I should hope that might be the case, and that justice was about to overtake the monster, if I were certain that it came from a real feathered animal which belonged not to her."

"I never till now heard that property in the bird could avert the omen."

"Nor does it commonly; but here the case is different from any other. Though exactly like the crowing of a cock, I am persuaded that this was a deception; and that, in truth, the sound we heard was but the voice of one of the hag's familiars, raised to announce our coming."

"Really," Challoner remarked, "if this said witch is so well provided with

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guards and spies, we have not acted wisely in seeking to take her by surprise."

"Nay," Thorpe replied, "that I never expected to do. What I promised was, that you might see some of her familiars. I do not believe you will yet be disappointed; and one you have already heard."

"That is a doubtful point, even with you."

Thorpe motioned to his companion to be silent. They had moved but a few paces farther, when a large frog leaped before them.

"There, there," said Thorpe, "now look," touching Challoner on the arm, to direct his attention to the object of his speech. He then added, in the phraseology of exultation, but in a voice which plainly told that in his judgment

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the moment was too awful for triumph: "Will you believe your own eyes? Have you a doubt now?"

Challoner calmly desired to know what was the matter.

"The matter!" exclaimed Thorpe; "saw you not that hideous toad?"

"I saw what I believe to be a frog, whose rest we have disturbed."

"I can tell you then, that what you believe to be a frog, is no other than a well-known familiar belonging to these agents of the devil. Not past a week ago, this same toad, or fiend rather, entered the cottage of one John Atkins, a carpenter dwelling by the road side, who supecting what it was, presently whips it up and throws it into the fire. He saw it burning, when on a sudden there was a great flash, and a report as loud as that of a pistol. A moment after,

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he looked in the fire, but no toad remained. It had fled with that same noise to its guilty mistress."

"How know you that?"

"You shall hear. The next day Atkins crossing this identical field, saw the same toad. It seemed to look another way, but hopped towards him. He knew its craft, and forthwith ran away."

"But why did he so, as it hurt him not when he put it in the fire? How could he afterwards be afraid of it?"

"Because being so near the witch's home, he knew not what other imps might be near to act with it, or what support it might receive from the witch herself, or some of her guilty companions."

"This is absolutely incredible."

"But the man went and made oath of the fact before the mayor. Now for this, Atkins received neither pay nor prefer-

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ment; therefore I leave it to your own common sense to determine if it be likely that he would have acted as he did, had his relation been other than true."

"Atkins might believe what he swore, and yet be deceived."

"What we have just seen proves to my thinking, that he was not deceived, since we have met with the very same appearance which he saw, on the self-same spot where it was seen by him. And how did we see it?"

"Truly but imperfectly, so far as I am concerned."

"Nay, but we saw it in front of the witch's dwelling, evidently looking out in the first instance to see who drew near, and then hastening back to make known what it had seen."

"You may consider this to be a witch's errand-frog, and suppose that it was travelling home to carry the news of our ar-

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rival; but I only suspect it to have thus bestirred itself to escape being crushed by our feet."

Thorpe remarked upon this speech, that it was hard to convince those who were resolved not to believe. He had no doubt that his own view of the case was the correct one. Besides supposing the familiar as he called it, to have retired to communicate with its principal, he described its flight to have been not a little accelerated by a few grains of the dust from Joseph of Arimathea's grave, which he said he fortunately had sufficient presence of mind to throw on it the moment it crossed the path.

Unconvinced by all he had heard or seen, Challoner walked tranquilly towards the cottage. They were half way over the field which lay in front of it, when a light appeared, and the door opened.

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"The familiar has done its errand," Thorpe remarked, "and see, another is now coming in the shape of a dog."

He had not ceased to speak, when the being he had seen *in the shape* of a dog, came towards them, barking as it came. Thorpe called on Challoner to note that its barking was unlike that of common dogs; and Challoner could not deny that there was something peculiar in the sound. He clenched more tightly the hand in which he grasped the stick, but he abstained from using it, when the creature which had attracted his attention by its vociferous and hostile approach, began to fondle on him and solicit his notice.

"Touch it not," cried Thorpe, when he saw Challoner extend his hand to pat the animal on the head, "you know not what power you may give this cursed object over you if once you favour it."

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"You have spoken too late," said Challoner, while he caressed the dog, which barked not threateningly as before, but in joyous acknowledgment of the kind reception he had met.

A slight movement was perceived both by Challoner and Thorpe immediately in front of the cottage, and this seemed to attract the attention of the dog, who forthwith retreated.

"This familiar, sent out for the same purpose as the former," said Thorpe, "is now returning to report what he has seen. Have you a doubt remaining?"

Before Challoner could offer any reply to this interrogatory, footsteps were heard leaving the cottage.

"The hag herself is coming forth," Thorpe whispered.—"We had as good retire."

The sounds had ceased, but Challoner

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had an imperfect view of two figures of rather tall stature, which stood between him and the cottage. One of them was more advanced than the other, and while he looked on the form, it seemed to increase in height.

Thorpe glared on the apparition with infinite amazement and alarm; pulled Challoner by the cloak, and again advised an immediate retreat, whispering,

"It is the tempter himself whom the witch in her wrath has sent forth to fight her battles. See how gigantic his form has become."

And Challoner, however disposed to deny that Thorpe was right, was himself sensible that the figure had nearly doubled its height since it was first seen. Regardless of the intreaties of his friend he advanced. He saw a living being apparently ten feet high, grasping in his

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hand a weapon of some sort, what, he could not determine, through the gloom which prevailed.

Here Thorpe again bethought himself of the dust which he had taken the trouble to procure from the grave of Joseph of Arimathea, and determined to make trial of its efficacy. He recollected the form set down by divines held to bemost conversant with such affairs, as that which was proper to address a damned spirit. He accordingly threw a grain or two of the dust towards the supposed fiend, while he solemnly demanded —

"In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, why troublest thou me?"

The writers of that period who were best acquainted with the ceremonies necessary to be observed in communicating with the spectres of deceased persons, or with the devil, whatever form he might

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assume, laid it down as a rule which ought in no case to be departed from, that these awful words must be repeated three times. This done, it would be incumbent on the spirit apostrophised to make his apologies, to justify the course he had taken, by imparting what he had it in charge to unfold, or to relieve the complaining party from his presence. On this occasion, the devil or the spirit, with whom Thorpe attempted to hold converse, had nothing to say for himself, but vanished even before the words had been completely pronounced the first time. At that moment a sound assailed their ears, which Thorpe thought seemed like an enormous weight breaking the earth, and piercing to its centre, and which Challoner himself likened to a stamping with the feet. The words had been uttered only once, but to make all sure, as it was considered that very

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serious inconvenience might arise from neglecting any of the formalities prescribed for the better regulation of the intercourse with spirits, Thorpe prudently repeated them twice more. Challoner gave no opinion on this ceremony, but Thorpe afterwards declared himself perfectly satisfied that it had had the desired effect; and he even stated that while he was yet speaking, he had most distinctly heard the word "Hush!" pronounced by the demon, which he considered to have been addressed to himself in the way of supplication to stay his speech, and thus escape that punishment which devils were supposed to have a great distaste for, a ducking in the Red Sea.

Thorpe held that he had now fully made good his words, and given his friend as wonderful a display as he could have desired. Potent as the adjuration

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pronounced was proved to have been, like a prudent general he was disposed to rest content with the advantages which he had gained, and not to go the length of entering the witch's abode.

Challoner tacitly admitted himself to be convinced by what he had seen that his former opinions were erroneous. This, at least Thorpe understood him to do, as he readily consented to retire when the figure which had been visible to both was no longer seen.

But when Thorpe came to make known that such was his belief, he was surprised and in some degree shocked to learn that he was mistaken. Challoner appeared to remain as incredulous as ever. He said he had been induced to return, when invited to do so, partly because he was convinced that by going forward, nothing could be learned which would alter his opinion, or cure the prejudices of his

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companion, and partly because what he had seen made him expect their further advance would expose them to interruption from beings not of a supernatural class, but of flesh and blood, whose reasons for being there at that late hour he was somewhat puzzled to guess.

It was in vain that Thorpe went over the series of proofs which their excursion had produced. The crowing of the cock; the appearance of the familiar "*in the form of a toad;*" and the attack which they had sustained from "*something in the shape of a dog*;" and, finally, the exhibition of the arch enemy himself, "*in the form of a tall black man.*" These were all treated by Challoner as things but little to the purpose.

They returned to Redburn somewhat discontented. Thorpe was ruffled by the unchangeable character of Challoner's opinion, and Challoner felt a little dis-

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posed to murmur that he had sacrificed several hours to so little purpose. He was however, assured that strong as were the proofs which had already been afforded of the existence of witches in that neighbourhood, others would shortly be forthcoming not less conclusive, though Thorpe scarcely deemed it possible that any could be more so. The great discoverer who had gained immortal glory by defeating the devil and his earthly allies so repeatedly, Master Matthew Hopkins, would arrive in a day or two; and his coming would prove the destruction of the horrible crew, whose arts had so repeatedly assailed his property, and whose malignity he doubted not, would soon be directed against his life.

Challoner said but little in reply, but struck with the manner of Thorpe, whom he had till that day regarded as the

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possessor of good sound sense, he half reproached himself for having revealed so much of his history as he had been induced to disclose; but it was not now to be recalled; and though to one so flighty as Thorpe had become, it might have been wise to be less communicative, there was nothing in what he had told which could induce serious apprehension. Thorpe endeavoured, but in vain, to persuade him to remain another day. He was fixed to go to London, where he believed his arrival was expected with anxiety, by one who had soothed him during the most afflicting moments he had known. This was Lady Maitland, whose health he understood to be in a precarious state; and as she had expressed an earnest wish to see him, he could not suffer himself to be detained by all that Thorpe could promise in elucidation of the ways of witches; nor even

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by the prospect of seeing his godson James, the heir of his old friend, who had gone to London with Albert, but whom, for the gratification of his guest, Thorpe offered to send for immediately.

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CHAP. V.

Yet fear thou not, but speak audaciously.
SHAKSPEARE.

As Challoner persevered in the resolution which he had announced, he returned to St. Alban's early in the morning. He had told Robert that he would do so; and at the moment of his arrival, the trusty servant was engaged in paying the innkeeper. The latter could not but look with kindness on the payer of money. There was something so atoning in the act of handing over cash, that he was disposed to forgive the past.

"Well, my master," said the landlord, "though you were not over courteous when you arrived, I hope you have no reason to complain of your lodging here."

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"Not much; your bed is certainly not harder than the floor."

"And I hope you found the provisions good?"

"Some were eatable."

"And the attendance?"

"The attendance was like the company, no great things. But there, I have paid your demand. Moreover there is a four-pence, for the drawer and the chamber-maid to divide between them. And now, friend, — vender of drink I mean, — you may away, for my master requires my service more than I do your conversation."

"Well," said the host, "you are at all events satisfied with my charges, since you have not disputed my bill."

"Quite the contrary; but my master forbids me to wrangle, since I got put into the cage for threshing an innkeeper

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at Northampton, who was nearly as arrant an extortioner as yourself."

"Your master knows people in our line must charge."

"Why, yes; he says you cannot help it."

"Nor can we, Master Robert."

"So he declares; for he says you do it from iniquitous instinct, which makes robbery come as natural to an innkeeper as mousing to a cat."

"What you call robbery —"

"You call trade. I know it; and you, after plundering me, if I, from distress, should steal half so much as I have lost, you would be competent to sit on a jury, in the character of a good man, to send me to the gallows."

"Marry, if all were like you, innkeepers could not live."

"True; if all were like me, there might be some hopes of bringing the whole

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body to justice. But, as things are, I deem them necessary evils."

"Needful goods, when you are famished and weary in a strange place, methinks. People must pay for their fare."

"To be sure. This the worshipful members of your calling never forget to hint."

"How should they endure if they did not? All trades must live."

"I suppose so; and, no doubt, you consider that the same providence which furnishes thieves to the hangman, and sailors to the shark, sends travellers to you."

"It is beyond all question, that without travellers we should want."

"And they, having been in your clutches, must want through falling in with you. No matter; for, as you say, all sorts must live. The spider must have his fly, and you your guest."

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The landlord began to feel ruffled at the compliments he received, and now took a louder tone than he had previously used.

"When you tell me —"

Robert had had no wish to provoke him. He now saw his master in the chamber he had occupied on the preceding day, making signs for him to go up. He prepared to obey, but made an hasty effort to sooth the innkeeper, which he expected would give him entire satisfaction.

"Save your breath to cool your pottage. Never think I mean to speak reproachfully. I don't blame a rat for being a rat, a vulture for being a vulture, or a landlord for being a landlord. There must be devourers and vermin of all sorts. You, I dare say, cannot help being what you are. If Nature had given you talents to make a serving-man, you might

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have been as I am; and I, when I grow old and worthless, shall probably get turned away; and then, being unfit for anything else, God only knows whether I may not be tempted to keep an inn myself. Should I fall to dishonest practices, I may consider those in your line safer than rifling stragglers on the highway, even if my present strength were to remain to me."

While speaking he folded up the bill which he had just discharged, and carefully deposited it in a leathern bag, in which the money confided to him for such purposes was secured. These matters adjusted, he hastened to his employer, as he finished his peace-making speech, without waiting for answer or comment.

Challoner had but few arrangements to make. Among these, the disposing of the flower, which has been mentioned, was most prominent. It was handed to

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Robert, to be given to the care of the man who had brought it to the inn; a labourer, who for some years had been paid by Challoner to tend this plant.

Challoner and Robert took their departure without further delay. The day was fair, and Challoner frequently paused to admire the richly wooded landscape, and verdant meadows which challenged attention on either hand. Sometimes a well-remembered object made him sigh, while it recalled years which were fled, and reminded him of feelings in which he could once indulge—feelings which were no more to be revived than the days in which they had been known. While thus occupied, he was roused from a reverie into which he had fallen by the trampling of horses. The sound rapidly grew louder; those from whom it proceeded approached; and he saw two per-

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sons, one young and of good appearance, who forthwith accosted him.

"The brightness of the morning be upon you, good Sir. I thought to have greeted you earlier, for I have the pleasure to know to whom I speak."

"Indeed!"

"Yea, in very deed. Now you, I dare say, have not the pleasure of knowing me."

"If it be pleasure to know you, I certainly cannot pretend to its enjoyment."

"O, then, it's all to come. Your worship shall know how it chanced. By the way, I must first stipulate, that you shall not tell my old father."

"Nay," said Challoner, "it will be your fault if I do, for I may never know his name, if your father's son have wit enough to keep his own council."

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"Of that I am not certain. Chance had nearly thrown us together yesterday, and I know not how soon we may be again in the way of meeting."

"My curiosity, young gentleman, is not so easily roused now as it was formerly, or what you have said would certainly have induced the question, who are you?"

"I am your worship's godson. — Master Jemmy Thorpe."

"Are you really James Thorpe?"

"I think so. If not, I have been an impostor from my cradle, for I have always passed for Master Jemmy. It's a wise child, they say, that knows his own father. This I cannot pretend to do; and, to my poor thinking, it's pretty well to know my own godfather."

"You were but a very boy when I last saw you. It would have been impossible for me to recognise you, and I

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cannot but wonder that you were enabled to do so much by me."

"Let your admiration pause, while I unfold. I slept last night where this bluff brazen rogue at your heels kicked up a riot."

"A riot!"

"By snoring; in no other way, I believe, though he was pretty near doing it."

"How did it happen that you were like to create a disturbance?" Challoner enquired of Robert.

"Because," said Robert, "people choose to take offence at nothing. I only told them the truth."

"Only told them the truth!" James exclaimed. "That was enough I think. Tell the truth, of but the last twelve hours of all the people of the best fame in the kingdom, and a pretty hubbub will ensue. Five thousand murders, and ten

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thousand divorces are the least that can be calculated upon for a beginning."

"And did this fellow tell you in his sleep aught of me?"

"No, but your name I got from the landlord, who told me that you were gone with my father to his home."

"How happened it that I saw you not there?"

"That is what I am about to tell, but what you must not tell again to my honoured papa, unless you have a desire to bring poor little Jemmy into a scrape, out of which he will not soon be able to get himself. You shall know all about it. I left town yesterday with ——. But stay — I must pause here to do the thing properly in order, and introduce to your especial notice and patronage, my friend Master Tom Green. This gentleman, you must know, has the honour to be a vagabond."

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"How?"

"How! By act of parliament, I believe. He is, in other words, a noted player. You look at him rather critically, as if you thought, from the capacity of his mouth, that his ears ought to be put somewhat backwarder, to be completely out of its way. But mark you, Tom is not a tragedian."

Challoner looked on Green, and could scarcely withhold a smile at the association of his name with tragedy.

"I see your worship is disposed to laugh at the idea of the ruefully ludicrous, which Tom's physiognomy suggests. Never mind Tom, the gentleman will never laugh you out of your countenance. If he did, how humanity would profit by his merriment! But hold up your head, Tom: nature, in giving you that admirable squint, and that horseshoe mouth, made you independent; for

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when the Puritans shut up all the play-houses, you had only to exhibit your phiz in a corn-field to scare the crows, and live like a gentleman."

"Marry," said Tom, "I wish you would make your words good."

"Because then I should make your face good."

"Yes, if it enabled me to live like a gentleman; for it has not done so yet."

"Your ideas are too lofty. Being the son of a respectable merchant in the city, as you say, (your parents having kept a small-coal shop,) and you, moreover, being the first and only tender pledge of their love, you consider yourself entitled to the luxuries of fortune, while throwing up the occupation I would assign to you, to act at the *Red Bull.*

"But," said Challoner, who seemed weary of this trifling, "you were about

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telling me something which you seem to have forgotten."

"So I was; but Tom's face scared my recollection, as it did his own horse yesterday, half a mile from the road intended to be travelled. What I was going to say was this: — Tom Green, of the Theatre-Royal, Red Bull — they call it among themselves *Royal*, because if the King never went there, we know he would be glad to go if he could, — Tom and I set off from Saint John Street to have a little acting at St. Alban's, where a party of sly good fellows expected our coming. When we got there, we found that the Mayor, set on by Harrison and Peters, had taken up our *Antonio* (for our play was to have been 'The Merchant of Venice'), and would not let him off for so little as a pound of his flesh, but must needs keep his whole carcase. Hereupon, Tommy Green could not exhibit his *Gobbo* graces.

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Now, you must know, there were two bonny wenches, whose father, though once a banker, has been reduced to hide in a small house near St. Alban's, came over to enact *Portia* and *Nerissa!*"

"What!" exclaimed Challoner, with surprise, "were females to have acted?"

"Even so. They, however, used the precaution of coming in men's apparel, so that few would have more than guessed the trick. These, observe you, are good royalist wenches, who rightly deem there is no sin in a play, as the Puritans pretend."

"Ladies of very liberal ideas, no doubt, who not only approve of a play, but come in the dress of the other sex to assist in its representation."

"These pretty jades being thus disappointed, and no play beginning by the coming-on of evening, when it should have ended, I and Mr. Tom must needs

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escort them home. There we found the good man of the house was absent, and their brother made us welcome to stay with them. Whether it was the spiced wine I drank, I cannot say, but somehow or other I lost my way when I would have gone home. We tramped about the fields till we saw a light, when, going near it, I found it came from the hut of the old witch."

"Did you so?" enquired Challoner, with some eagerness, for he now felt an interest in the young man's narrative, which it had not previously inspired.

"We did," said James; "and so, cried I, 'let witch or devil live here, I'll ask a civil question.'"

"You went then to her cottage?"

"I did."

"And did you converse with her?"

"I did. By-the-bye, there are two of them; and one of them, but for the devil-

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ish black hood she wears, would not be an ill-looking woman."

"And were they well-spoken and obliging?"

"Very much so, indeed. They could not well be off of it, I was so polite to them. 'Ladies,' said I, 'we would not put you to an inconvenience by borrowing your broomsticks, though, if you happened to be journeying our way, and had room for two, we should like to get up behind, if you would set us down at the neighbouring town; but as you, perhaps, are not for taking the air yourselves to-night, be so accommodating as to tell us which way we ought to go.'"

"And did they direct you?"

"Very accurately indeed, and the good-looking one offered us refreshments. To be sure, they had no wine, but I took a good draught of milk from her hand."

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"Then nothing remarkable occurred?"

"Not while I was there; but the moment her hood had closed, I was just getting over the gate — Tom was exactly behind me at the time, when I heard my father's voice, very solemnly enquiring why I troubled him! It would not do for me to be caught there, or I would have demanded why he troubled me. As matters stood, I thought it best to crouch down till he had walked off. Now this it is which I am anxious to conceal from my father."

"Nay, it is desirable that it should be communicated to him, for he believes that it was an evil spirit which he saw."

"Well, perhaps, he was less out in that than he has been sometimes; but however, he sees so many unearthly things, that whether he believes himself to have beheld a hobgoblin or two, more or less, is of no consequence."

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"You make too lightly of your father's feelings. I think you would do well to undeceive him at once."

"That, my worthy Sir, would be no easy task. Fathers are generally self-willed, and undutifully obstinate when their sons endeavour to teach them, for their own good, how they ought to behave; but my good papa is more perverse than anybody else, when you come to talk of spectres and witches. I am persuaded that he would incline to the belief that I had sold myself to the devil, if I were to tell that it was I whom he addressed last night, when he supposed that he was confronted by that much-calumniated personage."

This opinion James stoutly maintained against all the arguments that Challoner could use. He added, that he had left St. Alban's to travel towards London,

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partly from fear of being discovered in the neighbourhood of Redburn — partly from a wish to overtake and pay his court to his godfather, and partly that he might rejoin a friend whom he expected to encounter on the road.

He and Challoner continued to journey on together, and their conversation turned on public affairs. The godson declared these to be in a very unsettled state, and gave it as his opinion that the people generally would rejoice to witness the restoration of monarchy.

"And on what grounds have you adopted this belief?" demanded Challoner.

"Simply on this; that they are weary of the canting hypocrisy which has prevailed for some years. None but a set of crazy old men, withered dowagers, and maidens past hope, can favour a government so tyrannically stupid."

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"Which prohibits all play acting," Green put in.

"Ay," resumed his companion, "and worse than that, which made kissing a girl a capital crime."

"Without benefit of clergy," added Green.

"Yes," said James, "you must look for no benefit of clergy if you, seek acquaintance with the other sex without benefiting them to the amount of the marriage fee."

"Indeed! I thought it was no longer common for marriages to be solemnised by the ministers of religion."

"Nor is it in church as formerly; but the parties disposed to commit matrimony when they go before a magistrate are sure to find in him a fanatical parson; and he, though too much honoured in being likened to the orthodox clergy,

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like them, will not forget to exact the marriage *douceur*."

"But is the dissatisfaction of which you speak general among the people."

"It is. Since they gained what has been called freedom, they have suffered so much from tyranny, that one and all consider by rebelling against the late king, they only gained an opportunity of leaping out of the frying-pan into the fire."

"Why, the taxes are certainly now much more onerous than ever they were in the king's time. This the nation must know."

"They do know it; and those who were formerly friendly to what was called a free government, now feel much disposed to rise against it. My friend Rhapsody, who used to apologise for the irregularities, as he termed them, which had occurred at different periods, now

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acknowledges the acts of the government to be quite indefensible."

"Having once favoured the revolutionists?"

"Decidedly. To be sure, he was but seventeen when he made his song in their behalf, which he knocked off in a fit of school-boy enthusiasm. It was, however, a good deal relished by some of the roundheads, who but for the ambling measure in which it was written, would have set it to a psalm tune. It ran thus:—

'Never tell me the licence young Liberty takes
Should teach acquiescence in tyranny's sway;
If dazzled our vision when morning first wakes,
Shall we therefore deplore as an evil the day.
The disorderly efforts, while freedom is new,
To guard and extend our best national wealth,
I only as infancy's stretchings can view,
Which mothers declare prove the babe is in health.

'Nor tell me the evils which subjects endure,
Where the will of a merciless despot is law;
Though painful, are easier borne than the cure,
If Britons the sword of resistance should draw.

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Then fight for your birthright — away dastard fears:
A freeman to bleed, and to die with the brave,
Is better than living through thousands of years
To perish at last but a grey-headed slave.'"

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CHAP. VI.

Knock on my heart, for thou hast skill to find
If it sound solid, or be filled with wind;
And through the veil of words thou view'st the naked mind. DRYDEN.

THOUGH Challoner was not sorry to have seen his godson, and though, excepting that libertine air which with young men of vivacity is perhaps, somewhat too common, he saw nothing to which he could object, he would willingly have dispensed with his further attendance. But James manifested no intention of soon parting with him; and when as the day advanced, he attempted to shake him off, the effort only served to convince him that it was not easily to be done.

"I think," said Challoner, "we must now separate, for I am about to deviate from the London Road."

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"I hope," said James, "I am not to lose my worthy godsire so soon."

"You may have business in town which will require your presence."

"I have no business to look to which ought not, and which shall not give way to the pleasure of enjoying your society a little longer."

"But your father may expect you: indeed I think he said he did."

"Not for a day or two; and I have no wish to encounter him till he has, in some measure, got over the apparition which he saw the other night."

Challoner then told his godson that he proposed going to Southgate, where matters of some importance claimed his attention. James offered to attend him there and await his leisure.

To this Challoner had serious reasons for objecting, and reasons, too, which he did not care to state. Though enough

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had fallen from his companion to satisfy him, that possessed of his secret, it was not likely that James would designedly thwart him, he doubted his prudence too much to think of trusting him with what was not only important to himself, but which, if improperly revealed, might compromise the safety of others.

He therefore felt compelled, in plain terms, to inform the young man that he wished to visit Southgate unaccompanied. But he added he would not refuse to join company at some other place on the road to London, that they might conclude their journey together.

"O, then," cried James, "be our meeting-place at Hornsey. There, just opposite the little barn, with an uncouth tower at one end, which the natives call a church, and which is too humble to move the canting tyrants of the day to break its windows or deface its unadorn-

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ed walls,—just there, live Lesley and his sister."

"Indeed! The elder Lesley I much esteemed. I shall have great satisfaction in seeing the son."

"And you will have great satisfaction in seeing his sister, that is, if you find delight in gazing on beauty. Celia Lesley is one of the loveliest females in the kingdom, or commonwealth."

"And if it please you," said Challoner, "bestow the man who follows me at the nearest inn."

James undertook this, and they parted, Challoner promising to repair to Hornsey before nightfall.

Having left his company, he took the path to Southgate, warily looking back several times to ascertain that he was neither followed nor watched. He entered the village, put up his horse at the inn, and then walked forth as if to con-

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template the surrounding scenery. With the exception of a few children who were engaged in pastimes befitting their age, he saw scarcely any one moving in the neighbourhood. At all events he discovered no one whose appearance was calculated to give him alarm, and he sauntered to the door of a cottage which stood by itself, and demanded of an aged woman who sat spinning at the door, if Peter Mac Manus, the travelling thread-merchant, was there?

He was answered in the affirmative, and directed to seek the person for whom he had enquired in the upper apartment. Thither he proceeded and would have opened the door and passed in, but he found it secured.

"Show me the corner," said a voice from within.

Challoner understood this demand, and immediately put under the door, the

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corner of a sheet of paper which he had torn from one on which he had been writing some days before, and kept for the purpose of producing it on the present occasion, that by the exact fitting of the fragment, his own identity might be proved.

"'Tis well," was the remark of the person who received this token. "Pause yet a moment, and you shall be admitted."

In a few moments the door opened, and a man meanly attired stood before him with a bandage over his eyes. Challoner started at this, for after the proof he had given of his being the party expected, he naturally concluded that all further precaution or disguise would have been deemed superfluous.

"Forget not the ancient proverb," said the blindfolded inmate of the chamber, "that 'walls have ears,' and so fashion thy discourse that if they could become

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witnesses they would nothing testify that might bring thee to harm."

"In truth, good Master Bentley," said Challoner.

"Is it thus you observe the caution," interrupted the other, "which I have just given? From one of your years and discretion I expected not such a greeting at this moment."

"I stand corrected," Challoner replied: "your appearance, so different from what I expected it would be, provoked enquiry, and for the moment threw me off my guard."

"Be careful and remember the admonition which I have offered."

While speaking, the supposed dealer in thread placed a shutter against the window, so as wholly to exclude light from the apartment.

"This," said Challoner, "I deem unnecessary."

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"And why?"

"Because if overlooked our motions would reveal nothing; nor would they be such as to challenge particular attention."

"This is true, but still prudence justifies what I have done."

"It may be so."

"It is so; for in a few days I shall probably be questioned as to whether I have communicated with any one from *Mr. Best*, (I deem it well to speak the language of *Elizabeth*,) and something may depend on my being able solemnly to swear that I have *seen* no one sent by him."

"Your caution seems to me excessive, but this at the worst is an error on the right side."

"Now hasten to inform me of whatever you are possessed of relative to *Mr. Best*. Is he willing to superintend the business on the terms which I wrote

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were the only ones on which I could engage."

"He is. I am authorised to say, past differences shall be no more remembered; and he is quite ready to proceed to the *East Indies*, whenever you think the proper time for making the voyage has arrived."

"This is well so far. But how is the *second* affected."

"He has declared himself anxious for the prosperity of *Mr. Best*."

"But is he disposed to embark any *barrels of figs*."

"That is doubtful."

"May *Mr. Best* hope for his assistance in another way, to the amount of three or *four bags of pepper*."

"I fear not. But should he prove fortunate in his first venture, much may be looked for: further shipments will take place. Now, inform me what is the

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prospect here. Have you any *figs* in your keeping?"

"I think several *barrels* will be soon at my command."

"Any *nutmegs?*"

A large quantity may easily be had at a short notice, so I believe, provided the one thing needful be not wanted.

"You mean, *brown thread.*"

"I do. This, furnished in sufficient quantity, *bags of pepper*, *barrels of figs*, *cases of nutmegs*, and *wines*, and *oils*, will not be looked for in vain."

"I rejoice to hear it. The state of the *East Indies* then is decidedly favourable."

"*Mr. Best* may be assured of that. Let the *brown thread* be forthcoming at the proper time, and all the rest will follow."

"Then I am in hopes, enough of that will be furnished at no distant period."

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"Shortly, I doubt not, it will be in my power to communicate agreeable intelligence. In the mean time, should we meet, we must not seem to know each other. The vigilance of *the factors* on the other side would surprise you, if I were to tell you all that I know. But this is unnecessary. It is sufficient for you to be informed, that we cannot be too wary in matters of business. I will not longer detain you. When you write to *Mr. Best*, it may be as well hinted, that he must take care not to remain too long in the neighbourhood of the *young man*, or he may be detained on account of a former claim, to a considerable quantity of *brown thread*."

Challoner then took his departure with the remark that he was aware caution was necessary in all trading affairs. This was said aloud for the dame below to hear as he descended the stairs; and in

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the same tone he bade Master Peter Mac Manus farewell.

The person who was thus styled by Challoner was in fact but the representative of one of Oliver Cromwell's generals, who disgusted with the state of things which succeeded the abdication of Richard Cromwell, now shared that wish which had become general among the people for the restoration of monarchy. When he proposed that they should converse in the language of *Elizabeth*, his meaning was that in reference to state affairs they should use, pursuant to a previous agreement, the terms adopted in certain cyphers formed in the reign of the queen of that name, to indicate objects very different from those which were expressed, and which had now been adopted by the friends of the king. By *Mr. Best* the sovereign of England was meant; by *second*, the king

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of France; by the *young man*, the king of Spain; by *bags of pepper*, ships of war were understood; by *barrels of figs*, soldiers; by *cases of nutmegs*, mariners; by *factors*, spies. *The East Indies* meant England; *oils* stood for victuals; *wines*, for munitions of war; and *brown thread*, which was to provide for every thing, was money.

Challoner mounted his horse and soon quitted the village. He went by Colney Hatch, and pursued the winding lane which leads by Muswell Hill to Hornsey. He regretted the promise which he had made to the younger Thorpe; for besides that he was anxious to communicate forthwith what he had heard from Bentley to one in correspondence with the king, matters connected with his own private affairs made him desirous of getting to London without delay, and without that society which he had now no

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idea of escaping, as he had no intention of breaking his word.

On quitting Southgate, he had looked carefully around to observe if any one followed him. Satisfied that he had no ground for alarm on this subject, he advanced securely when his progress was suddenly arrested by the sound of his own name. He scarcely believed his senses when he saw a tall athletic man stand full before him, whose voice he had heard, not then for the first time, and who now accosted him with

"What, Master Challoner again in Middlesex! Nay, then I suppose there is something yet to be attempted for Charles Stuart."

Challoner offered to avoid the person who had addressed him; but the man kept in front of him, so that without urging his horse full against him, Challoner could not advance.

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"What not a word!" cried the other. "Do you affect not to know me? or do you think by appearing shy to make me suppose that I am mistaken in your person?"

"I do not affect not to know you," said Challoner, "but the recollections connected with our former acquaintance are not such as to wake in me any strong desire for a renewal of it."

"Times are changed Master Challoner, since you and I were acquainted. The ungrateful crew I served with so much zeal have requited those exertions which secured their power, by turning it against me; they have pursued me with unrelenting malice; and, covered with insult, I have at length been driven into the obscurity in which I now repose, consoled only by the hope that the fools who have scorned me will not long be able to hold things together by themselves."

"That hope you are free to enjoy,

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but I can have nothing to say to it. Your restless disposition was formerly your enemy, and so I find it continues. When you, George Johnson, first raised your voice in the king's time against what were really grievances, I believed you animated by sincere patriotism; but the ferocious lengths to which you were soon carried satisfied me that impatience of all government was the passion by which you were moved; and the cruel measures which it was once your boast that you had caused to be proposed in council, proved you a wretch devoid of feeling."

"In assenting to the death of the king, I did no more than others."

"But with you originated the horrid order for inserting those staples in the scaffold which were placed near the block on the morning of the day which saw the martyr led out to die. It was you that

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first contemplated the dragging of your sovereign down by ropes, even as an ox is dragged to slaughter."

"It is true that when I accompanied Sir Hardress Waller, and others of the committee appointed to select a fit and proper place for the execution, I did suggest that such preparation might be needful, nor was it deemed unreasonable. Charles had repeatedly refused to acknowledge the high court of justice; and what assurance was there that he would yield more obedience to the axe."

"I speculate not on what he might have done; it is enough that I know what you did to justify the wish I avow of seeing you no more."

With these words Challoner offered to advance.

"Stay," cried Johnson, "though I admit that I am of those who, having once resolved that an act is fitting to be

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done, are not inclined to let petty obstacles retard the execution, and would therefore counsel precautions which men of weaker nerve could tremble to adopt; yet I could now be as good a friend to royalty as even Master Challoner himself."

"It may be so, but with this I have nothing to do, and will therefore pursue my way."

"Why so hasty? I affect not to feel any weak remorse for the part which I formerly acted; yet an ardent, a maddening thirst for vengeance would induce me to unite with those who are labouring to bring back Charles Stuart."

"And why is this signified to me?"

"And why is this simplicity affected with me? It is not now when Oliver is in his grave, that those friends of the Stuart family are likely to fall off, who clung to the king, as they call him, the moment it

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was known that it was resolved to execute his father."

"I have not sought to intrude my opinions on you," said Challoner; "what my private sentiments remain can be of little consequence to any one. The existing government allows those to return who choose to make their submission, and how are you informed that such is not the purpose of my coming to England?"

"Your look when you first recognised me, more ingenuous than your speech, now when for your own benefit and security I invite your confidence, revealed to me more than you suspect. But I blame not your caution. Methinks, however I can give you some strong reasons for believing that you are at present addressed with sincerity. In the first place, if you know what I have endured you will not wonder that I should

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thirst for revenge; and as the Stuart party is evidently fast gaining strength, you may easily comprehend that I should have no objection to get my neck out of the halter which I know is prepared for it, should Charles ascend the throne of his fathers without my aid. Though life has few charms for me; though I confess the ingratitude, the folly, the damnation of others have doomed me to remain a wretch, yet I would willingly avoid a scaffold."

"Your desire for revenge may be rational, and your fear is certainly not unreasonable; but why are you pleased to suppose that a cause which it should seem owns no lack of friends, should select me to be the moving agent in its most weighty concerns."

"Knowing your attachments in other days, I cannot doubt your presence in this part of the country is connected

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with those preparations which, I am well assured, are in progress to pave the way for bringing in Charles Stuart. Perhaps I know more than you suspect. Provoked, you will find me as reckless, as desperate as ever."

"If I am to be believed, matters very distinct from state affairs engaged my attention at St. Albans where I rested last night, and now induce me to hasten to London."

"Indeed! Oh, then, I must be wrong. If you were not engaged in politics at St. Albans, and have other concerns to attend to in London, of course you pass free from all suspicion. Since there are two places where you are not immediately to act, no one can suspect that you have any thought of treason to the commonwealth elsewhere."

"You seem incredulous?"

"And am as I seem; which is more

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than you dare lay your hand upon your heart and say. I invite you fairly to confide in me. Eventually, you will find that to do so were wise. I am an outraged man; I live but for vengeance. It may be in your power to array my wrath on your side."

"At present I have nothing to say that can induce me longer to pause in my journey."

"Again you refuse. What if having solicited your confidence in vain, I were now to demand it? If, before I allow you to pass on, I determine to search your garments and your saddle? May I not obtain some intelligence which might satisfy a reasonable man of the part you are about to act?"

While he spoke he produced a pistol, which, without seeming directly to present it at Challoner, he held in such a position that if discharged its contents could not miss the person of the in-

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dividual he had thought proper to detain. His manner was equivocal. Challoner was not certain whether Johnson meant to intimate that he was prepared to meet resistance, or whether he actually intended to restrain him by force. He believed the latter, and exclaimed with some indignation,

"How now! what means this robber-like attack?"

"Robber-like attack!" echoed Johnson, in a tone which spoke him highly incensed at the epithet applied to him. His voice however, immediately subsided into calm expostulation. The pistol was rather hastily withdrawn, and conveyed beneath his cloak. "When I expressed a wish that you should make some brief stay," he said, "I little expected that you would deem the language which you have used descriptive of my conduct."

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Challoner was surprised at the alteration he remarked in the speech and deportment of Johnson, but had made no reply, when a youth accompanied by a lady on horseback, passed them. From the direction in which they approached, Johnson had been the first to see them; and this circumstance might have produced the change in his manner which has been noted. At all events, Challoner suspected such to have been the case; and, as the strangers were journeying the way he proposed to go, he determined not to lose the protection their presence might afford. He accordingly left Johnson abruptly, and followed them. As he passed on, the former called out to him, in a tone which seemed to invite a return while it threatened a visit, "We shall soon meet again."

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CHAP. VII.

Let not an open hand disperse that store,
Which gone, life's gone, for all tread down the poor.
DEKKER.

THE youthful pair who had thus opportunely come up, were engaged in conversation, and seemed not to notice Challoner and Johnson. As they passed, the latter turned his back to them, as if to guard against recognition. Challoner urged his horse forward, so as to keep within a few yards of them, and believed himself very near the residence of Lesley when descending a long steep hill leading into Hornsey the animal he rode fell, and he was thrown forward with violence. Those whom he had followed stopped, and he was lifted

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from the ground by the gentleman, who enquired with an air of great anxiety, if he had suffered severely from his fall.

Challoner was too much stunned to make a suitable answer.

"I am sorry," said the youth, "to have troubled you with a question, which I but too plainly perceive might have been spared. It however fortunately happens that assistance can soon be had. I will bear you to a place where you shall receive every attention."

He was about to take Challoner into his arms, when the latter now partly recovered from the shock, thanked the kindness thus manifested, but declared himself able to walk.

"Then lean on me, Sir," cried the other, presenting his arm; "we shall soon obtain assistance."

"Why, how now, *Rhapsody?*" exclaimed James Thorpe, who at this moment ap-

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proached. "Ha, Master Challoner! What, has your horse played you a jade's trick, coming down hill? O, zounds! I see by his bleeding knees that he turned puritan though you would not, and has been at his prayers. How did it happen? Where are you pushing?" he angrily demanded of Robert, who now pressed forward.

"Why, forward to my master, to be sure."

"Well, but you could look before you, and might have seen that I was in the way."

"I did see that you were in the way."

"Then you ought to have known that it was your business——"

"To push you out of it."

"My dear, dear Sir, I am rejoiced to see you," was the address of another person, who now came forward, and

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who was no other than Lesley, to whose house Challoner had proposed to go. "I am glad to see you on any terms; but it is a serious drawback on the pleasure to find you thus disabled."

"How did it happen, god-papa?" enquired James, before Challoner could make any reply to Lesley. "Why, I thought you were too good a horseman to let this animal give you such a touch of the precipitate."

"Can I procure any thing for you," Lesley asked, "that may be of service to you at this moment? Shall I direct, —"

"Don't worret," Robert called out; "you must see that this is no time for compliments."

James was about to notice the rudeness of Robert, when Challoner spoke.

"Really this alarm and anxiety are

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not justified by the cause of them. Though somewhat shaken, I am not materially injured by the fall. I am pleased to meet with you, Mr. Lesley. To you Sir," addressing himself to the individual who had first hastened to his assistance, "my best thanks are due for your active humanity."

A silent bow, with an accompanying smile of satisfaction, were the answer to this acknowledgment. Robert was told that he might transfer his attentions to the horse, and Challoner walked through the village of Hornsey, at the entrance of which the accident had happened, to the house of Lesley.

Here the lady who had witnessed the accident, impatiently awaited his arrival. She had hastened forward to announce to her brother, Mr. Lesley, what had occurred, and he on the instant concluding that it might be the guest he

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expected, had run with James to the spot.

Gratified to find himself in the society of the son and daughter of an old friend, Challoner soon forgot his mishap. The cordiality of Lesley was such as he had a right to expect, and the beauty of Celia he found deserved more than all that had been said in its praise. Her symmetry and grace commanded admiration, but there was an expression of animated sweetness in her countenance, with an air, as it seemed to him, of benevolent exultation in his safety, which gave her bewitching features a character he would not have scrupled to pronounce angelic. Rivetted on these attractions Challoner repeatedly detected the eyes of the young gentleman who had lately assisted him, and who had perhaps rendered him more important service when he termi-

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nated his conference with Johnson. Challoner felt a wish to know something of him, for in the confusion which prevailed, he had not heard his name, but he collected from the manner in which he was addressed by James Thorpe, that this was the poet the latter had called Rhapsody, and whose verses he had repeated on the road.

The conversation became interesting to the parties engaged in it. Challoner learned with satisfaction, that some of his old friends still survived and remained faithful to the Stuart cause. James rattled on with great hilarity, and freely expressed his hope that the then existing government could not endure much longer, and the poet remarked that that state of things which it was once fondly believed by many would bring liberty and unalloyed comfort to

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the nation at large, had enthralled it, and disappointed all the expectations excited, so that those who were once among the staunchest advocates for republicanism, were constrained to admit that it had brought sorrows in its train, to which the people of England had been strangers while monarchy continued.

The manner in which he spoke proved that the sentiment he had expressed was really his own. The language which he subsequently held, confirmed the good opinion which Challoner had conceived of him. Though bold and decisive, it was not unguarded, and his prudence seemed as conspicuous as his courage.

Lesley entreated that Challoner should remain there that night, and in the morning he would endeavour to procure him another horse. Though Challoner had made light of the injury which he

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received from the fall, he felt too much indisposed to resist the pressing entreaties of Lesley, and consented to stay.

This point being settled, as James could not look for the company of his god-father that night, he prepared to go when the other visitor offered to retire. He took leave, promising to return the following morning. The two young men had left the house, and one had already mounted and set off, when Lesley following called to James, who was just starting.

"A word with you. Is it very important that you should reach town to night?"

"Not at all," was the answer: "I indeed purpose resting at Islington, where Rhapsody lodges."

"I expected," Lesley resumed, "a visit from *old Iron-face*, as you dubbed him, whom you have seen here once or

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twice, and whose name you were curious to know."

"As you were careful to conceal."

"The secret shall now be yours, if you will wait on him for me. He resides near Enfield; the house is on the right as you pass from the chase, encompassed by a high wall and large gates."

"I know it; the centre of the building is like a chapel, between two spacious wings."

"The same: one Johnson is the owner of it. Now the fact is, he was of the round-head party, and I care not that Challoner or any of my father's connection, should know that he and I are on terms; therefore I would not have them meet; and he himself objects to come here, but when I am quite alone. He is likely to be of service to me, and I wish to spare him any unpleasant recognition. What I should like

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you to do, is this. Bear a note to him from me, and state, as from your own knowledge, that the circumstance which makes the communication necessary, is of sudden and unexpected occurrence. He will entertain you hospitably, and you can depart as early or as late as you please in the morning."

"Nay, I must be early; for at Islington I have friends to meet at seven of the clock, who will not be baulked. But shall I sleep in old Iron-face's house? I shall fancy it a giant's castle, and expect the master of it to approach me while I sleep with his *fe fa fum*."

"Will you go?"

"Certainly; but I must take the dog that follows me — Tom Green."

He can be bestowed; but tell him he must not talk too loudly of play-acting in the presence of his host. To Rhapsody you need not mention the errand

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on which you are going. Make some other excuse for leaving him."

"I will manage all that. Give me the letter, and now consider me on my way to the giant's castle."

The letter was handed to James, and they parted. Lesley returned to Challenor, and apologized for his temporary absence. The manner of the youthful poet had attracted Challoner's attention, and he expressed some curiosity respecting him, mingled with warm approbation of his speech and deportment.

Lesley concurred in the eulogium.

"I know not," he said, "the man whose sentiments and whose actions would better justify the good opinion you have conceived. I am largely indebted to his generosity."

"Indeed!"

"To you I need make no secret of it;

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and I feel assured you will not disapprove of his conduct, when I tell you, that knowing the difficulties with which I had to contend, in consequence of embarrassments growing out of the late troubles, he has generously lent me five hundred pounds, and resolutely denied himself the enjoyments which, at his age, men are apt to prize above everything, to gain the means of thus administering to my comfort."

"You shall have double the sum from me; but pay him to-morrow."

"My dear Sir, this unlooked-for bounty overwhelms me, and commands my eternal gratitude."

"Talk not thus, Lesley. Eternal gratitude for a small loan were too much."

Pardon me Sir, but I must differ from you: gratitude ought not to terminate when the benefit is no longer felt, but ought to survive and remain in full

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force for ever, as the interest fairly accruing on a good action."

"No more of this: but tell me, is not this young gentleman considered the future husband of your lovely sister?"

"I beg to assure you I have encouraged no such idea."

"Though good in other respects, is there anything that would make you object to him as a brother?"

"Nothing."

"Why then do you seem to consider it necessary to protect yourself from the suspicion of having countenanced his passion? That he loves Celia, if I can read the expression of a human face, there is no doubt."

"My only reason for so expressing myself was to guard against being lowered in your opinion."

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"In my opinion!" exclaimed Challoner with astonishment.

"Even so; for I knew not what your views might be, and was therefore anxious not to cherish expectations which you might find it necessary to disappoint."

"I do not comprehend! What wish or what right can I have to interfere in the affairs of a young gentleman of whom I know nothing?"

"I am now astonished in my turn. Know you not by whom you were assisted?"

"To the best of my recollection I had never seen him before."

"Can it be possible? I deemed that you had recognised him while riding with my sister, and that he had been your guide before the accident."

"It was not so."

"And," enquired Lesley, "are you

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really up to this moment uninformed that the object of your warm commendation is no other than — than the boy ——?"

"Than the boy! — what boy? — what is it you mean?"

"Than the boy whose life you saved many years ago, and whom your bounty has protected even till now."

"Amazement! — Have I then seen him?"

"How do I regret that you did not know him sooner! But, late as it is, I will send to recall him."

"No, Lesley."

"There is a horse saddled. — Albert will deem it no toil to come, even at midnight to greet his benefactor."

"Hold Lesley; you err in this. Circumstances press me not for details, make me anything but solicitous to see him again."

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"I surmised that you had returned mainly for that purpose."

"But such is not the fact; and now that I know who he is, I certainly regard him as no fit match for your sister."

"Indeed! This is what I always feared, but had still hopes that their love might meet with your approval. Though our family is fallen from affluence, it is not dishonoured: and, forgive the freedom I use, I had thought your ancient friendship for the Lesleys might induce you to pardon the ambitious thought which looked up to an alliance with one so near and dear to you, as I doubt not, Albert is."

"You are wholly mistaken, if you suppose me to reprehend any aspiring on your part. The truth is — but I wish to abstain from going into particulars, — he is not of parentage that can entitle him

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to marry into an ancient family like your's."

"Nay Sir; such distinctions I am well content to overlook. I could not regard it as any disparagement to my family to see Celia the wife of one so generous as Albert has proved himself. The pride which would spurn worth, because it chanced to be unconnected with family-honours, I have not learned to respect. If, then, ——"

"Lesley, no more. On this subject I can say nothing but that the young man shall not suffer for his generosity. But this I pray you, bring him not, at any time, where I may be. A crowd of afflicting recollections come over me. Robert, attend me."

Robert assisted his master to a chamber which had been provided for him, and immediately returned.

"Your master," said Lesley, as the

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man was about to retire, "is an extraordinary character."

This Robert had no objection to admit.

"Did you hear our conversation just now?"

"Not I. What, did you think me such a rogue as to turn spy upon my master and you?"

"No, my friend; far from thinking you a rogue, I consider your plain blunt manner of speaking a sure indication of honesty."

"There you make a blunder. A man may be rude, and yet a great knave."

"That is true, but still I respect one who speaks his mind."

"Nay, that is but small merit in any case: but in many instances minds are so little worthy of being spoken, that silence were better."

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"Your ideas are very correct, and do you honour."

"Do they? I am glad to hear it. There are very few who can find that out, though I hope they do not much misbecome my low birth and humble station."

"The plain truth I honour in any one, be his birth and station what they may. These, as we cannot choose them for ourselves, ought in no case to be the subjects of scorn and reproach."

"Well, I think you are right there," said Robert, in a tone which he meant should be rather complimentary.

"I am glad that I have said something at last with which you can agree; because when you say you can approve, I know you speak sincerely; and this accounts for the value which your master sets upon you, of which I have heard."

"I never heard that he had set a value

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on me before. What does he mean to appraise me then, like a pig or a jackass?"

"I mean that he much esteems your probity and attachment."

"He has more sense than to do any thing of the kind. My probity survives he doubtless concludes from its being little in the way of temptation, and my attachment to him, he has a right to suppose, marks but a resolution to be faithful to my own bread and butter."

"He is most generous. He very unpectedly made me a most liberal offer this evening."

"Did he?"

"He offered me the loan of a thousand pounds."

"Poor gentleman! he sometimes forgets himself, and does things that make people who don't know him twit him a good deal."

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Really! Why, what could they say in a case like this?"

"I can't undertake to guess half of what would be said. They will, perhaps, begin with the old proverb."

"What proverb?"

"Fools and their money are soon parted."

"I should hope no one would use such rudeness towards him."

"Well, I wonder at that now," Robert replied somewhat hastily, "since you are so fond of the plain truth."

"Go on," said Lesley; "that is a well-imagined pleasantry. — But, my good Robert, what I wished to ask you was this, — You — you do not consider Mr. Challoner likely to forget what he has promised to-night?"

"Why, you don't think he was drunk, do you?"

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"By no means."

"Then do you think being sober, he would tell you a lie?"

"Certainly not; I say he is *not* likely to forget."

"Ay, but you mean to ask,—Is there not great danger that he will?"

"Nay, you put a forced construction on my words."

"So I do, for the construction I put on them is forced on me; and you are partial to the plain truth."

"Well well my good fellow, to cut the matter short, what I was about to say was this,—if in the hurry of preparing for his departure this business should chance to slip his memory, do you remind him of it, and you shall have something for your trouble."

"O, very well; but he won't think of asking if you talked with me. If he does,

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he shall be told of his promise, you may depend."

"Your bearing this in mind shall be duly requited my honest friend."

"As for that Master Lesley, I am not anxious to deserve or to receive reward from any but my master, but for so small a kindness as telling him that you hope, when he talked of lending you money, he was not amusing himself at your expence, (of which, perchance there was little prospect,) and therefore desired to have his memory jogged; it shall be done without scruple."

"But with all decorum."

"Decorum! Do you mean to call my breeding in question?"

"No, I was only afraid my good fellow, that I—that you would perhaps, accidentally in some measure misrepresent."

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"Never fear me; I will be most careful not to wander from the plain truth, while telling you hope he will not have the meanness to depart in the morning from what he promised at night."

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CHAP. VIII.

"What, like a corse?"
"No, like a bank for love to lie and play on;
Not like a corse; or if,—not to be buried."
SHAKSPEARE.

JAMES and Green hastened to Enfield, and were admitted into Johnson's house. A servant brought a candle to light them into an apartment, and offered to take the letter to his master and bring an answer.

"Bring your master," cried James, eyeing the man curiously, as if endeavouring to recall where he had seen him before.

"You stared at that fellow," said Green, when the man had left the room, "as if you were determined to know him again when you meet."

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"The truth is, I already know him. This is no other than that poor devil who some time ago tried to pass himself off for — but stay, I thought I heard him coming."

They listened, but the man did not immediately approach.

"This fellow," said James, "took it into his head to pretend that he was no other than — you will remember him directly — that he was no other than our Saviour."

"Is it the same man?"

Here the man reappeared to report that his master would soon attend them.

"Stay," cried James; "who are you?"

The party thus questioned stared, but made no reply.

"If I am not mistaken," James proceeded, "your name is Jemmy Naylor.

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Let me look at your frontispiece a little."

While he spoke, he parted the hair of the man which had been combed straight down over his forehead, and discovered the letter *B* branded thereon.

"I thought I was right," said James; "you are no other than the hopeful James Naylor."

"Thou hast said it," replied the man.

"Why, that is your old answer. Well I am glad to see you look pretty well after your troubles; they gave you, I remember, a tightish job of it. First two hours in the pillory at Westminster, a flogging thence to the Old Exchange by the hands of the common hangman, next two hours more in the pillory, and then I believe they bored your tongue through with a redhot iron."

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"Thou hast said it."

"I suppose you began then to wish you had kept your tongue within your teeth. After that the letter *B* was stamped on your forehead; that was not to signify blockhead, I suppose?"

"Thou hast said it."

"Then you were packed off to Bristol, where you had a ride on a horse bare-backed, with your face to the tail, then another flanking in the market-place, after which you were indulged with a return to London, to enjoy hard labour, solitary confinement, and starvation in Bridewell."

"Thou hast said it."

"And these gentle means are reported to have wholly cured your former freaks, and they say you no longer engage to heal the sick, to raise the dead, or to fast forty days, but are

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content to take the wages of a master who wants other services from you."

"Thou hast said it," said Naylor, who did not enjoy the recollections which James had applied himself to awaken, and whose resentment would give no other answer than that which had been his favourite response in the day of his extraordinary imposture.

"And is that all you can say?" cried James. "Am I to understand that your words are thus few, because you deem short answers best for fools?"

"Thou hast said it," repeated Naylor, and he left the room.

"Well," said James, "I expected to meet with some extraordinary apparition or goblin within these walls, and am not disappointed since I have stumbled on this Naylor. We shall now see old *Iron-face* himself. Lesley cautioned me not to let you speak too much of plays,

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but I am not disposed to be very nice in such matters, and have a great mind to stir up the old round-head. Hush!—here he is."

Johnson made his appearance. He glanced at both, as he entered, with an air of mistrust.

"Are you," said he to James, "the person mentioned by Mr. Lesley in this paper as his friend?"

"The very same; and I am able to inform you, from the evidence of my own sight, that the company which prevent him from seeing you to-morrow arrived quite unexpectedly. It was indeed quite a matter of chance, that I proposed to my friend Challoner to meet me at Lesley's."

"To whom did you propose a meeting there?"

"To Challoner, a very near friend of mine, on my father's side."

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"Oh! — Challoner!"

"No, not O'Challoner. He has been in Ireland, and may be a native for any thing that I know; but there is no O before the name."

"Well, Sir, Mr. Lesley desires that I shall entertain you. I am ill provided, but such fare as I can produce, with tolerable lodging, shall be yours. Come this way."

Johnson then took the light and walked before his visitors. He crossed the hall, and passed through a long gallery, at the extremity of which turning into a passage, he opened the door of an apartment in which there was a fire, and such furniture as indicated the room to be in common use.

"Now Sirs," he cried, "you shall have such food as remains from our last repast."

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While speaking, James Naylor and another domestic entered with part of a haunch of mutton, a flitch of bacon, wine and other refreshments.

"The keen air of the Chase has given me an appetite," cried James, "and I will eat. So I doubt not, will my worthy companion. He, it should have been known to your worship, is no other than the hopeful Tom Green, the Tatterer of Passions."

Johnson had seated himself, and his thoughts seemed to be occupied by any thing but the scene immediately before him. The manner in which he was addressed awakened his attention. That he did not comprehend the speech of his guest, he ascribed to his own abstraction, and with some embarrassment enquired what had been said.

"I thought," said James, "my description would have been sufficiently

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explicit. I pronounced Tom to be a Tatterer of Passions."

"I know not the meaning of your phrase."

"Why, then, I would say, Tom is — no, he was, for now, alas! 'Othello's occupation's gone,' he was an actor."

"An actor! Have I then a play-actor under my roof?"

"Under your roof! Why, to be sure you have. You would not have him above it would you? That might suit your tom cat, rather than my Tom Green."

"I wish no offence to the messengers of Master Lesley, but I expected not that one of them would be of such quality."

"How should you? you are no lord, and could not hope that Tom would hie hither, when he might go to Holland House and be protected. But being here

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he shall amuse you. Would you like a song? Tom will sing. He has a pretty voice, which shall give you an idea, if you like the plaintive, of a waggon-wheel that has wanted grease for a week."

"This may be meet entertainment for some,"

"To be sure it may; but as we have now supped, it shall be *after-meat* entertainment for you."

"My ideas," said Johnson, "were formed in other days; and such delights I covet not."

"But they are now fast becoming the mode. Davenant only wishes he had the same assurance that his nose will return, as he has that plays must be restored. Already has he got up a sort of tragi-comical matter, with scenic pictures. Now Lowen, old Jack Lowen, whose ideas, though not like yours, are

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of the old sort, declares, to give pictures which are to tell the spectators where the scene lies, will never succeed. For why, he argues, images of all places cannot be had, and to make what portrays Venice one night stand for Malta on the next, will only breed confusion, which never could arise if the ancient mode were adhered to, that of simply writing up, 'This is the island of Malta,' or 'The city of Venice,' when the action shall be supposed to lie there."

"To me this seems to boot but little. With or without the pictures, he who would be so beguiled of his time, can be cozened to his heart's content and soul's despair."

"Nay, worthy Sir, you seem to take up the hatred of old Heath for all dramatic doings: he forsooth, says of him who

'Comes in on the stage,
Rapt, as it were, with an unwieldy rage,'

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He, I say, cries,—

'Fie on this mimic skill.'"

"Nor do I marvel at it."

"I hope you favour not this view of the theatre," said James, "for that would much disturb Tom Green, who is evermore rehearsing with rapture the words of Nick Breton:—

'I would I were a player, and could act
As many parts as came upon a stage,
And in my braine could make a full compact
Of all that passeth betwixt youth and age.'"

Johnson looked displeased, but made no remark.

"Now," James proceeded, "I would not be such, inasmuch as, still quoting from the same—

'I do fear
If I should gall some goosecap with my speech,
That he would freat, and fume, and chafe, and swear,
As if some flea had bit him by the —.'"

"You need not thus fatigue yourself," Johnson interrupted, "to repeat verses

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to me. I wish not to hear of what may concern the garish apparel, masques, vaulting, tumbling, hobby-horses, and juggling castes."

"Why now my grave Sir, you are almost quoting Stephen Gosson. Next you will say with Eusebius, that we only find at a theatre 'diabolical songs and dancing wenches, or rather girls tossed up and down with the furies of the devil;' adding of course, in the words of Prynne, 'these things are done by her whom the devil has possessed.'"

"I have no thought to spend on such themes; but this I would remark, that once, as godly Master Rainolds tells, not even for safeguard of his life would a man undergo the shame of wearing woman's attire; yet now, so common is the practice, that you speak of boys thus dressed, as if they were true females."

"Not so; I but refer to what split-

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nosed Prynne tells. But women, let me inform you, will soon become actors in common with men. Soon shall the stage recover all that it has lost. Already are we preparing new limbs for *Aaron* the *Moor*, party-coloured hose for the clown, the image of a rock, and a lively picture of *Hell-mouth*, for"—

"Of what?" demanded Johnson; and the sullen contempt and louring displeasure which had till now sat on his countenance, suddenly gave place to a vivid expression of horror, of wrath, or of both combined.

"You seem moved."

"The villanous abominations of which you speak are well fitted to move any one."

"In former times, what I last mentioned was as common as 'cloth for the sun and moon,' 'wings for Mercury,'

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or a 'sign for Mother Redcap;' and in the most pious moralities what was better known than '*Adam moritur et transit ad infernum pro uno pomo?*' "

"On such moralities," said Johnson, "you and your friend may descant in my absence."

"Never leave us so, nor think that plays are henceforth to be other than moral. I will read what shall please you, but that it is so short, which will appear to you a lesson not unfit for the pulpit."

"I am called hence. Your chamber shall be shown to you."

"I pray you listen. It shall not detain you for a moment," said James; and Johnson, who had risen to go, subdued the emotion which he had manifested, and resumed his seat.

James then read the following stanzas:—

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THE SPARROW AND THE BLOSSOM.

"Sweetly smiled the bloom of spring,
When a sparrow on the wing
Saw, and flattered, and admired,
Vowed his eye could ne'er grow tired;
And, to consummate his bliss,
Asked but one— one modest kiss.

"Ne'er suspecting guile might woo,
Say what could a blossom do?
With a blush his suit she granted,
Gave the felon all he wanted;
But his kiss occasioned smart,
For he pecked away her heart."

A groan from Johnson attracted the notice of James, who, however, went on.

"Then the sparrow laughed outright,
As a human spoiler might,
Having marred his beauteous prey;
While consigned to swift decay
The flower, how joyed the feathered brute
To know destroyed the promised fruit!"

As James repeated the last lines, Johnson dropped his head on his hand, and

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covered his eyes. He sighed deeply, then starting from his seat, he glanced with indignant suspicion at his company, to observe if they noticed his altered deportment. He spoke not; but, with a slight farewell motion of the hand, hurried out of the room.

Naylor came shortly afterwards to conduct them to their chambers. These were immediately over the room in which they had supped.

"Pray Mr. Jemmy," said James, as they passed up stairs, "have you no females in this establishment? You have not such a thing as a wife or a sister, have you, with whom I could condole on the scarification of your back and visage, and the boring of your tongue?"

"If I had either," cried Naylor, indignant at this question, "she should not be forthcoming at your call. You think me an ass."

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"Thou hast said it," James replied, mimicking his manner. "By the bye, since you have found your tongue, may I take the liberty to ask if, when you undertook to fast for forty days, you proposed to fast through forty nights as well?"

Naylor retired without satisfying the enquirer, who now addressed himself to Green on the characters of the master and man whom they had seen. The chambers in which they were to sleep communicated with each other by a centre door. Green soon took possession of his bed, but James continued the conversation for some time, walking backwards and forwards through the two rooms.

"Well," said he, after a somewhat lengthened comment on what he had remarked, "I am glad to have seen so much of this place and its inmates, but I do not like

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the idea of retiring without knowing something of the female part of the establishment. Every thing is quite still; get up, and walk with me through these rambling apartments in quest of adventures."

"Not I; the old one will meet you and think you are looking after his daughter or mistress."

"Well, that will hardly ruffle him more than my lauding play-acting did. But if you won't come, I will go alone."

"Do so," said the player; "only if you happen to get your neck broken, never disturb me to tell me of it."

James took the candle and left the chamber. He found himself in a long passage, into which came the doors of a suite of apartments which were over the gallery through which he had been conducted by Johnson. This terminated in a spacious hall or landing-place, to which

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another and the principal staircase led. He was now in the centre of the building. A passage like the one which he had traversed appeared on the other side; and towards this, he directed his steps. He paused and listened at each door he found closed, and entered several chambers which had been left open. He was in one of these when he heard a female voice. It came from the extremity of the passage. He walked that way, and the sound was repeated. At first, he suspected that robbers had penetrated the building, for the cry was one of distress, and he sprang forward with the intention of entering the chamber from which it came. He was arrested by hearing the voice of Johnson, which demanded

"Why that vain shriek?"

"Father, no more," was the reply; "I have suffered enough."

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"Enough!" he sternly rejoined; "no, never can you suffer enough. No common pain can expiate the baseness of that rebel blood which has thus turned against the source from which it flowed."

"And is it but common pain which is inflicted, while I am doomed to endure yon appalling sight?"

"What!" cried the father, "is the baleful brightness which once gleamed from those eyes in lustful mirth wanting? Is the warm glow of the lascivious tempter no more? Are these the things, the absence of which shock thy startled senses?"

"Oh, spare me!"

"Why ask that I shall spare you, seeing you would not spare yourself? And thou, pale wretch," he cried, seeming to apostrophise a third person, "where now is the insulting glee, with which those features lately exulted in having converted

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my confidence into a crime, and made indulgence the unfailing source of infamy? Where is the scorn which refused the sullied toy, once the brightest object to which aspiring hope could point? Wilt thou again reject her? Mock her now!"

"In mercy forbear. Spare me this," the female wildly implored, "and I will welcome any other punishment. Scorn me — crush me — annihilate me, if such your pleasure, but let the dead repose."

The speech of Johnson was again heard; but at that moment James perceived another light flash in the passage. He extinguished his own; and had scarcely done so, when he saw Naylor enter the chamber next the landing. He immediately came out of it, with the air of a man who, on a sudden, recollected something that had been omitted, and descended the great staircase. James took

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this opportunity of retreating. From his own room he watched, till Naylor had again retired. He then retraced his steps, but heard no more of Johnson. James slept little that night, and when he rose in the morning, while endeavouring to resume his usual gaiety with Green as they rode towards Islington, he was often wholly lost in thought. The careless company in which he soon found himself dispelled much of the gloom; but he often recalled with wonder, mingled with indescribable awe, the last solemn prayer of the unseen female, "Let the dead repose."

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CHAP. IX.

'Tis often seen
Adoption strives with nature; and choice breeds
A native slip to us from foreign seeds.

SHAKSPEARE.

The good offices of Robert, which Lesley had been so anxious to secure, were not necessary. When Challoner promised, he meant to perform; and his memory was too retentive to forget a matter which he knew must be regarded by another as of no small importance.

Overwhelmed with joy by this circumstance, Lesley lost no time in seeking Robert. His anxiety to see that person sprung not from gratitude for any service which he could suppose Robert had been able to render him, nor from admiration of the frankness which, on the

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preceding night he had declared to be so much to his taste. A less amiable motive made him desirous of seeming liberal. He was fearful that the hint which he had suggested, might now be given when it was not only not wanted, but when it might by chance disclose his eagerness to avail himself of the proffered aid which he deemed it by no means incompatible with his future welfare, so far as Challoner was concerned, too keep out of sight.

"My good friend," he exclaimed, "here are the five pounds I promised you."

"I don't want them," was the answer. "Besides, I have not spoken yet."

"I am aware of that, but —"

"You think I am as likely to forget my promise to speak, as you yesterday judged my master was to forget his to lend, and so would bribe me to humbug him."

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"Methinks, Robert, this coarseness might be spared. I know you mean well, but you will perceive that you have been wrong, when I tell you that your kind aid is unnecessary."

"Indeed! Faith, I am glad of it. I am very glad that your ragged fortunes have been patched up some other way."

"They have not however been mended in any other way, than that which I yesterday contemplated; but Mr. Challoner has advanced me the sum which I named last night."

"He has, has he?"

"He has."

"Now my master is thought, by many people, a sensible gentleman; and yet, see how easy it is to fleece him."

"What do you mean, Robert?" enquired Lesley. "Your speech is affronting, and you are apparently cast down

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by the self-same circumstance, which before gave you pleasure."

"Why, the truth is, I thought you had got money from somebody else, and was in hopes that, for this time, my master had got out of your clutches."

"Well, we need say no more about it. Here is your five pounds."

"What for? I have done nothing for you, and you are no friend of mine."

"But I may be hereafter; so take the money as earnest. Now, of course, I do not wish you to say any thing on the subject to my friend Challoner, — do you mind me — not a word — you understand — "

"O, very well. The money you offered last night to make me speak, you are willing to give to buy my silence to-day. I don't care to be a tell-tale; so I shan't expose you. The money I'll

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take, as part payment of the thousand pounds you have got out of this unfortunate master of mine, and put it out at interest for him, that when he comes to want, he shall find it is not all lost. Therefore, Master Lesley, you will please to take it into account; and if ever you are ready to pay nine hundred and ninety-five pounds, you may call on me for what I now take, to make up the whole sum due to my master."

He received the money without any expression of satisfaction or gratitude.

"You are a diamond," said Lesley, "still in the rough, it is true, but a prodigious treasure; in short, you are —"

Here Robert modestly retired from the praises of which he was the subject; and Lesley finished his sentence as he felt, perhaps, but not exactly as he had intended to finish it, if the subject of it

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had remained within hearing, by adding the words, "a most impudent rascal."

Challoner took leave of Lesley. He was anxious to reach London that day. The relations of the female, whose conduct and whose fate he had so deeply lamented, Sophia, to whom he considered himself largely indebted for kind attention when he most needed it, was dangerously ill. She had become the wife, and eventually the widow, of Sir Joseph Maitland, and in both characters had corresponded with Challoner, though years had now passed since they met. Obedient to her earnest call, he purposed hastening to her. He had parted from Lesley, and was leaving the house, when Albert passed, unconscious that he was observed. Challoner wished to avoid him, and was not sorry that the young man's attention was too much engrossed by an object which

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appeared at one of the windows, to see anything else. A few steps further on, Robert dismounted to pick up a small book, which appeared to have been just dropped. It consisted of poetical trifles. Challoner doubted not, from the manner in which the name of Celia was celebrated, that these belonged to Albert, and could not resist the temptation to know more of the thoughts and of the abilities of the youth. He turned over the pages with melancholy interest, and in the ardent glow of passion which he remarked, traced feelings which had once brightened his own existence with the fairest dreams of hope, only to introduce heart-rending anguish and profound despair. The impassioned love there expressed was, so he judged, not to be cured, and he lamented that it had not been inspired for some other object. Though humanity had prompted him

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to snatch from death the offspring of that perfidy, which had destroyed his peace; though, without pain, he could not thwart the wishes of one whom he believed to be estimable, yet with the knowledge which he had of Albert's origin, he could not sanction his union with the daughter of his deceased friend Lesley.

It was in vain that he sought to persuade himself the child of Emma could have no share in her falsehood. Having snatched Albert from destruction, and preserved him from want, he did not feel that the claims of humanity extended still further, and required of him to place the object of his former care in the family of an old friend, where he must frequently meet with that presence, which could not but revive in him the fullest recollection of blasted hopes and bitter disappointment.

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He frequently opened the book and read, paused, affected by what he saw, and seemed unable to proceed. Then he looked at the manuscript again, as if to divert his present thoughts by turning to the source from which they immediately sprung. Sometimes he commented on them aloud: — "This is truth" — "This is real feeling" — "This, indeed, is what love ought to be." The last observation was elicited by the following lines: —

Though some by coldness may be moved,
I, follow but by smiles allured;
Would give an empire to be loved,
But not a thought to be endured.

For love, where felt its genuine glow,
With fond devotion lives
Less on the transports it may know,
Than on the bliss it gives.

He continued to read and muse till he arrived in London. There, on repairing to Lady Maitland's house in Hol-

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born, he found that, at the commencement of her present illness, she had been prevailed upon to take up her residence in the neighbourhood of Hounslow. He regretted that he had not been sooner informed of this change, but prepared to set forward towards her ladyship's new residence, when he heard himself accosted by name, and looking round, perceived Albert, who thus accosted him :—

"I cannot but express my regret, Sir, that I have not been more on the alert to execute a task which I consented should be imposed upon me."

Surprised at this address, Challoner eyed the youth somewhat suspiciously. An idea crossed his mind, that Albert had been informed of what he had desired should be concealed from him. He looked on him, however, but for a moment, and, turning aside, falteringly enquired,

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"What would you, Sir?"

"James Thorpe," he replied, "being at Islington, and withal somewhat fatigued by previous exertion, coveted much to see you. An aged person, once known to you passing well, had fallen in his way, whom he doubted not you would be much gratified to meet. Therefore, he wished that you should be informed of the same while yet you rested at the house of Mr. Lesley, in order that, without deviating from the road you designed to pursue, opportunity might be afforded for seeing the party of whom I spoke."

"Indeed! This intelligence comes rather late, young man."

"I confess the fault to be mine. Well content to be the bearer of a message to one, whose — whose —"

"Whose what?" demanded Challoner, unwilling to give time for a speech

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to be framed, other than that which had seemed on the point of being uttered.

"Whose deportment and sentiments, brief as my acquaintance has been with them, inspired esteem."

"Your readiness to bear a message to me at Hornsey, perhaps, originated in your being glad of an opportunity to see the sister of Mr. Lesley."

Albert looked embarrassed, and felt as he looked.

"I cannot deny," he said, "that seeking for one moment to speak with her, I lost my chance of meeting with you, and I was then so long detained by her brother, that the best exertions I could use, failed to enable me to overtake you sooner."

"Then I must presume you enjoyed a long interview with the lady."

"Not so. With her I have not delayed; but her brother unexpectedly

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claimed my attention. I was not aware of your early departure; and through him it was that I could not acquit myself of the message which I had to deliver, till now."

"I can ill spare time," said Challoner, "even for the space which will be occupied by my return across the fields to Islington."

"It gives me pain to know that I am the cause of your being subjected to needless toil, but I shall have much satisfaction in being your guide."

Challoner turned his horse, and took the way to Islington. The modest, but manly carriage of Albert won his admiration, but the thoughts which made him previously wish that he should cease to pursue Celia Lesley, recurred to him, and he judged it might be well to admonish him on that subject. Making

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an effort to subdue the strong emotion which he felt, Challoner said,—

"You will, perhaps, consider that I take a reprehensible liberty, young gentleman, if I venture any remark or speculation on your conduct or views; but I am tempted to say, and I have a reason for doing so, that I am much mistaken if you are not Miss Lesley's lover."

"If to admire be to love, then am I her lover."

"Admiration may exist without love, but they are generally companions in a youthful heart, where beauty is concerned."

"And I think a fairer justification of their union need not be sought, than may be found in Celia Lesley."

"That is a question of taste, in which I confess I should be reluctant to oppose you. You not only love, but are beloved, I suspect."

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"If I might hope it, I would not be so arrogant as to assert it."

"Nay, but I am much deceived if you have not asserted it."

"Sir!"

"You have asserted it by pursuing her, so I am informed, for months."

"But it is possible to follow even without hope."

"True, young gentleman; but I believe I have it under your own hand that you—

'follow but by smiles allured.'"

Albert recognised his own words with surprise. Challoner explained how they had become known to him by presenting him with the book.

"Allow me," said Challoner, "to caution you against surrendering your heart to the dangerous passion. For him who loves, there are calamities in

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store of which you dream not; and there may be circumstances peculiar to your situation which will for ever oppose your union with Celia Lesley."

Albert seemed affected, but endeavoured to resume his composure, while he replied, —

"This I have feared, yet I have not been without hope that the kind unknown to whom I stand so largely indebted, might approve my choice, and his sanction would, I have fondly pursuaded myself, leave but few difficulties to be overcome."

"Of whom do you speak?"

"Of one whose name I have never heard; and to which conjecture cannot point. It is his pleasure to remain unknown."

"That you can only ascribe to a churlish, or a proud, or an unsociable disposition."

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"Impatience to know the man to whom I owe every thing, never yet so forgot the duty of humble gratitude as to suggest aught so injurious."

"What cause do you judge he can have for acting unlike other men? who, to do them justice, are not very shy of making those who receive aid from them know to whom they stand indebted."

"I have not speculated much on the subject; but I have imagined, I hope not irreverently, that it might be his ambition in some sort to imitate the Deity, who makes his bounty ever felt by his creatures, but still is pleased to remain unseen."

"Such thoughts should not be indulged."

"At other times I have likened him to the good heart which incessantly occupied by cares for the good of others, is never exposed to the view itself."

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"You will perhaps find some other comparison, when you shall learn what I think I may venture to announce, for I am acquainted with some of his dispositions, that he will never be inclined to see you connected with the Lesley family."

"There I trust you wrong him. Benevolent as he has proved himself, I cannot believe that he would refuse the object of his long-continued bounty the greatest blessing man could know on earth, if favouring heaven had rendered nothing but his assent needful to secure it."

"And if in this he were unkind, would you not resist his authority?"

"To thwart him in any case would be affliction. But were he capable of the strangely inconsistent conduct you have supposed, the being he has sustained would lose all value. I know not that

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I could so fully recognise his right over my mind and person, and, more than that, over the peace of another, as to promise submission where obedience might seem unkindness to one most dear, and would be extremest misery to me."

The mingled tenderness and resolution with which Albert spoke, affected Challoner. He began to review the motives by which he was actuated.

"And ought I," he mentally enquired, "ought I to oppose the happiness of two virtuous beings? What if this young man be the son of a faithless —" but here reflection became too painful for endurance. He endeavoured to shake it off; and felt some relief when he saw his guide stop, and heard the hearty greeting of James Thorpe, who, now recovered from the temporary depression he had felt, welcomed him to Islington.

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CHAP. X.

Lowen in his latter days kept an inn, The Three Pigeons, at Brentford.

Dialogue on Old Plays and Players.

"WHY, Rhapsody, where have you been all this time? Marry, your *Pegasus* might have cantered with you to *Olympus*, and brought you back again before this."

It was thus that James accosted Albert, who briefly mentioned the cause of his lengthened absence.

"And, so," said he, having heard the explanation, "after engaging to tell a gentleman at Hornsey business of moment claimed his attention on the way to London, you let him quietly perform his journey, and then drag him back to Islington. This is the work of a man of genius! Now, had I sent any blackguard

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stable boy, or empty-headed drawer, the thing would have been done in a proper manner. But you, I suppose, were dreaming of blue eyes, of coral lips, of golden tresses, and Celia Lesley. You, like a nymph in detail, give me the *tout ensemble.*"

"Enough of this trifling."

"Trifling call you it? Nay, I speak but the language of sober reason. You poets like to nibble at an eyebrow, a dimple, a finger, or a foot; and the devil of it is, you in this way get such possession of the ear, that you finish by carrying the women away altogether. We old-fashioned admirers of the sex are treated as the doctors are by the quacks, who daily start up. Formerly one professor tackled all complaints, but now the aurist takes the ear; the oculist, the eye; the dentist, the tooth; and other meddlers, different portions of the human

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subject, till the regulars have hardly a fragment capable of entertaining a good pocket-filling disorder left to bless themselves with."

"You forget," said Albert, "that you desired to see Mr. Challoner on matters of great present moment."

"That's good! Oh, it shall be merry in England, now that you undertake to help out my memory. Pray what became of your own, good Master Rhapsody, this morning? Was it destroyed by a thunderbolt; flown away with by an eagle, or shipwrecked by the boiling surge of a stormy ocean on a rugged rock."

"Your wit seems as troublesome to you as my poetry can be to me."

"Never believe it, Rhapsody. You consider it a fine thing to muse and sigh; I hold it to be the privilege of youth to laugh and be merry."

"Then let each take the course which

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he prefers. I shall retire to muse perhaps. You can remain to laugh at your own good things."

"What, are you going back to Lesley's?"

"No, I am hastening to meet a person not unknown to you."

"Is it any one for whom I have a particular regard?"

"I can hardly answer for that; but at all events it is one who has a particular regard for you."

"Oh! that description will apply to half the sex. Without some better clue, I can never pretend to guess whom you are going to see."

"I am about to meet your father, who has written to me that he will be in London this afternoon."

"Here's mischief! Somebody has been telling him of my gammocks, and the undutiful old fellow has come up to

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school me for them. Do not let him know where I am, for I positively will not admit him to an audience to-day."

Albert took leave of the party and retired.

Challoner was not in the mood to be amused by the trifling of James. He turned to look after Albert; his unpresuming deportment interested him. He would have exulted at finding the object of his bounty so worthy of his care, had it been possible for him to think on this subject without recalling the event which had first made the youth dependent on him. To escape from that miserable retrospect he addressed himself to James.

"You have sent for me, young man, with such pressing instances, that I cannot but surmise something of importance has occurred."

"Guess again so please you, my

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honoured godfather. Nothing of importance has yet occurred. So now for your next surmise."

"You say nothing of importance has yet occurred; am I thence to gather that something may now be expected?"

"I knew a man of your parts could not fail to hit it. That which you will gladly hear of is about to take place."

"What may it be?"

"There is to be a play to-night at the Red Bull."

"But what is the matter of importance to which you desired to draw my attention?"

"Why *that*," James replied, with a look of mingled surprise and disappointment at the cold reception given to his intelligence. Is it nothing that the spirit of loyalty and of common sense has so far condescended to return to this rebellious and stupid Old England, that a

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play is likely to be acted again in London, as was common in the good old times, when that yelping cur, Prynne, paid the pillory for his standing with his ears, and carried away a scaried face as his receipt for the same?"

"I never concurred in the persecution of the theatres; but my admiration of them is not so great that I could suppose, when you entreated me to give you a meeting on a matter of importance, it was your object but to announce the coming representation of a stage play."

"Now am I grieved that you are baulked. Trust me, I felt satisfied that you would hail the disposition to restore the drama as the harbinger of the restoration of monarchy."

"It might be as well that you should not speculate on what may be the sentiments of others in such matters,"

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Challoner replied, cautiously looking to observe if any one appeared listening to this conversation. But he resumed, "It was farther mentioned to me, that I should here meet with one whom I must need desire to see."

"And so you shall. Walk into the parlour adjoining, and you will not be disappointed."

Challoner entered the appartment to which he was directed. There he found the former travelling companion of James, the player Green, in familiar conversation with an old man. The hair of the latter was silvery white, but his eyebrows were black as jet. Time, which had extracted the majority of his teeth, had given a sharp and rather ludicrous appearance to the lower part of his face; but his eye was bright and intelligent, and with his aquiline and well-proportioned nose, told that his

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countenance had once been any thing but deficient in dignity and expression.

Green and the old man did not continue their conversation after Challoner had entered. The senior rose, bowed, and looked as if he expected to be recognised.

"There," cried James, "now have I not kept my word? Do you know to whom I have brought you?"

"Indeed I do not."

"No! Well who would have thought of that! Years, to be sure, have given the nose and chin of this venerable personage some facilities for communicating with each other which they did not always enjoy; but still enough remains methinks to enable one of your penetration to distinguish Jack Lowen."

"Lowen!" repeated Challoner, with a look in which incredulity mingled with surprise.

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"It is even so," said James, "this is the very Jack Lowen, whom you used to know when the king was on his throne, and he in his glory. This is he who first personified *Hamlet*, and whom, on that account, people esteemed a curiosity. You in your young days used to delight to look on his acting through a long afternoon."

"He says right," Lowen remarked; "you, if you task your memory Master Challoner, may remember that folks used to tell with a double purpose on their tongue, that I was the *first* Hamlet, meaning thereby that I was the best as well as the first."

"But you have deceived me in this," cried James, "so I am advised. Old Taylor, they say, was the original."

"The character was Taylor's, and he being more majestical than I, was long much admired in it. But thus it

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chanced. On the afternoon, when 'Hamlet' was first to be done on the stage, comes down a heavy storm of rain. The Old Globe was open at the top, and the rain took us unprepared; so it was resolved that we should not act that day. Presently out pops the sun, and many came to see us. Then was it determined that the play should go on. But it so fortuned, that Taylor was not to be found; he, as it was afterwards said, had betaken himself to *The Cardinal's Hat*, which, though the stews had been formally put down, was said to have outlived the *last trumpet*. He alone being away, I knowing the matter, forthwith it was agreed that I for once should be the *Danish Prince*. I had good applause, and thus it was that though not of much account then, I was the first that personated Hamlet; but Taylor was intended for it and

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long played it, very nobly in some scenes, afterwards."

"Now, that you have spoken," said Challoner, "I recall something of your countenance, and am not sorry for this meeting. I indeed remember some hours of high gratification, for which I was indebted to you. It was my delight in my early days to be about the theatres. I remember you chiefly at *the Globe.*"

"I was there," said Lowen, "while my old friend, Will Shakspeare, was living, But after his *Ghost* was for ever laid, I played at *the Curtain.* Dick Burbage made me try a few nights at *the Fortune;* but Dick wanted to have it rather too much his own way, which would have made Golden Lane no lane of gold for me, so after awhile I betook me to the *Red Bull* in St. John's street, where I re-

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maied till the Puritans put down all stage-playing as profane."

"And that, I suppose, put an end to your calling."

"Not altogether, for though no play could be publicly done, the nobility and people of condition were glad oftentimes to engage us to act at their own homes brief interludes, scenes from comedies and tragedies, and whole plays, as well as this could be managed, their domestics appearing as some of the persons who had little to say."

"But was this profitable?"

"At certain times and seasons it was a tolerable get-penny, but at last it fell off. People were afraid of being spied upon by those who deemed it was to call down the vengeance of God on a guilty land, to countenance, harbour, or nourish a poor hungry player."

"This, I fear, was in some measure

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occasioned by the folly of divers of the fraternity, who would swear most vehemently while acting."

"That was the case about the time Queen Elizabeth died, and this caused the law against swearing on the stage."

"I did not know," said Challoner, "or have forgotten that such a law was ever passed."

"'Slife! It was enacted in the third year of King James. It declared that if, after a time which it named, 'any person or persons do or shall, in any stage-play, enterlude, show, &c., jestingly or profanely use the holy name of God, or of Christ Jesus, or of the Holy Ghost, or of the Trinity, which are not to be spoken but with fear and reverence, he or they shall forfeit for every offence ten pound; the one moiety thereof to the King's Majesty, his heirs and successors, the other moiety

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thereof to the party that will sue for the same in any court of Record at Westminster.' "

"Now you recite part of it, I recal the law. What effect might it produce?"

"The effect, by the Lord Harry! was to bring into common use all the oaths of Bobadil. Some we adopted for ourselves, which were thought to sound well enough, such as 'slife, 'sdeath, 'sblood, and zounds, but even to these, Sir Henry Herbert objected, and Condell was once informed of for using 'zounds;' and it being considered to mean no other than 'God's wounds,' which the prosecutor said was putting blasphemy in a more portable form for the readier utterance, he had difficulty in escaping the fine; and was forced to make satisfaction to the informer, which caused him to swear lustily when he

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found himself where he might so indulge without risk."

"And what became of you when acting fell off, and you had but rarely an opportunity of exhibiting those talents which once made you famous, and gave you wealth?"

"O! then," cried James, "as he had more teeth than he carries now, and could not break himself easily of the vulgar practice of looking for a dinner, he turned public depredator."

"How?"

"How! why he set up for an innkeeper, and took the Three Pigeons at Brentford, which he now holds."

"'Bating the waggery, it is true, that I have so done."

"And you were in some degree fortunate, to be enabled to do so. Did your fellows fare equally well?"

"Marry, no, Master Challoner. Their

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loyalty, as well as their calling, induced them to side with the King, and some of them were vilely ill-treated by the Roundheads."

"What became of Robinson? He was at *the Globe*, I think."

"No, he was merely of *Blackfriars*. Poor fellow, he was murdered."

"Indeed!"

"Ay, by that blood-thirsty hypocrite, Harrison. Being overpowered in the field, he demanded quarter, to entitle himself to which he grounded his arms. 'Cursed is he who doth the work of the Lord negligently,' was the wretch's reply, and while yet speaking, he fired, and shot the actor through the head. Those who survived the civil wars up to the period of the King's death, endeavoured to form themselves into a company. Taylor was then alive; and he, Pollard, Burt, Hart, and Stevey Hammerton,

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who, poor fellow, was the best woman actor we could get, together with myself, exhibited several times at the Cock Pit, in Drury Lane."

"But this was not allowed to go on."

"O no! after two or three days, a party of foot soldiers beset the house, and I dressed as *Aubrey*, in 'the Bloody Brother,' with Taylor and Pollard in their stage gear, were all carried prisoners to Hatton House. There, having borrowed our finery, they detained us till we had made submission, and professed contrition which we never felt."

Lowen proceeded with the allowable garrulity of age to narrate a variety of incidents connected with his profession, which were not uninteresting to Challoner, from the various scenes which they restored to his memory. Being thus engaged, he suffered himself to be detained longer than he had intended,

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and at parting he promised, that he would again see the old actor before he left England.

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CHAP. XI.

Listen, O floods! black night upon you dwell,
Thick darkness still enwrap you; may you swell
Only with grief! CARTWRIGHT.

THE various delays occasioned by the circumstances already detailed, made it impossible for Challoner to reach Lady Maitland so early as he had hoped, and when at length he found himself at the door of her residence, he paused ere he could resolve to enter. As the moment approached which was once more to bring before him the being who had known him in the most blissful, and in the most miserable crisis of his life, a thousand recollections came over him with unwonted force; and though steeled by habit against manifesting ex-

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traordinary emotion in those situations which are likely to discompose men most accustomed to mingle with the world, his usual tranquillity failed him now.

Lady Maitland while yet unmarried, and in all the bloom of youth and beauty, had never lost sight of Challoner, after those events, which separated him from Emma. Devotedly as he had loved, and agonised as he was by that fatal discovery which had convinced him of Emma's baseness, he thought not of seeking consolation in the arms of another. So to act, it seemed to him, would be in some sort to imitate the fickleness he deplored. But for this feeling, the charms of Sophia could hardly have failed to captivate him. He was not insensible to her great personal attractions, nor to the kind cares lavished on him when he most needed consolation. The former claimed his admiration, the latter his gratitude;

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their combined force certainly inspired a more ardent friendship than he could have felt for any one, not a female, but a friendship perfectly distinct from love.

He endeavoured to conquer the irresolution which he had felt, and knocked at the door. The instant it was opened, he anxiously enquired after the health of Lady Maitland, not in the cold matter-of-course way in which enquiries are made by those who call on their sick friends to comply with the usages of polite society, but with the breathless eagerness of one whose hopes and fears, in the highest state of excitation, await with impatient dread the information they court. He was told that she was extremely ill, but had that evening insisted on being lifted from her bed, and was then writing.

"Then I must flatter myself that she is somewhat revived, for I understood

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she was incapable of sitting up," was the comment of Challoner.

The servant mournfully replied, that his lady had not risen because her strength was returning, but in opposition to the remonstrances of her physician, and in the persuasion that no exertion could make her situation more desperate than it had previously been.

The man was then desired to announce to his lady that Mr. Challoner had arrived. At that name the servant remarked, with an air of satisfaction, that it was fortunate he had come, as Lady Maitland had been most impatient to see him, and even when apparently in a dying state, had frequently expressed deep regret for his continued absence.

As the servant ascended to the chamber in which the patient rested, Challoner was about to follow unbidden. But he checked his steps, deeming it better to

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wait for the summons which he doubted not would promptly follow the announcement of his name.

He deceived himself. For many minutes he remained alone. A faint shriek had reached his ear, but he was not certain that it came from the apartment in which Lady Maitland rested. It was however past all doubt that a confused noise, as of persons calling for each other's aid, accompanied with a movement of furniture, proceeded thence; and that his admission, which he had looked for the instant after his presence was signified, had been unaccountably postponed.

The individual with whom he had spoken, at length appeared, and reported that his Lady had continued writing up to the moment of her being informed that Mr. Challoner was below, when she

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became so faint that they could gain no answer. It was judged necessary to carry her to her chamber. But when this operation had commenced, she ordered them to pause while certain letters which she had been writing were consigned to the flames, nor would she consent to return to her bed, till after witnessing the perfect destruction of the papers. She now wished to see him.

With solemn step Challoner obeyed the summons. As he passed into what had once been the resting-place of a beauty, whose charms it had been the pride of fashion to celebrate, reflections suggested themselves which it would be no easy task to express. He thought of the burning ardour, the throbbing impatience, the blissful expectation with which it had formerly been approached; and contrasted these with the chilling

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dread, the deep dismay, and the melancholy forebodings which oppressed his own bosom.

He looked on the bed, and saw its once lovely occupant pale and motionless. The ghastly hue of her countenance heightened the awful sensation previously created. His eyes were fixed on hers; he advanced with a recognising look, but spoke not.

"Challoner!" the lady faintly exclaimed, and her almost lifeless hand, which rested on the coverlid unclasped, as if to invite the touch of the visitor.

He gently took her hand, and, obtaining a fuller view of the dying Sophia retraced the outline of those features which had once inspired the fevered glow of passion. Enough remained to awaken in him a vivid recollection of what had been, and he could not but marvel while he noted

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how different the aspect she now wore from any to which he had ever anticipated that her countenance could be brought.

These feelings came over him with lightening-like rapidity, but he had no time to embody them in speech, or to express any thought arising from them, ere they were dismissed by the effect his presence produced on Lady Maitland. On his first approach she made a feeble effort to rise; but had scarcely half accomplished her object, when, with a convulsive sob, she fell backwards, uttering an exclamation of horror!

Her attendants appeared; and Challoner deemed it right to withdraw. He was descending the stairs, when he was followed by a female, who informed him that it was the wish of her lady that he should remain in the adjoining apartment,

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as she desired much to speak to him so soon as she found herself sufficiently collected to make the attempt.

He complied with the request; returned, and took a seat in the room where he had been invited to remain. Occasionally he could hear those about the lady hushing each other in whispers, as if anxious to preserve the most perfect silence. Once and once only, a few distinct sentences were audible. They expressed but an opinion that the sufferer was going very fast.

Challoner unconsciously fixed his eyes on the fire, and was roused from the reverie into which he had fallen by the singular appearance of the ashes of the paper which had just been destroyed. He saw large flakes trembling from the agitation of the coal flame near them, and with some surprise perceived that a portion of the characters which had been

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traced on the paper were still legible. The circumstance struck him as uncommon; and to ascertain that he was not deceived, he looked at what had attracted his attention more closely. The inspection satisfied him that he was not in error, and he plainly saw his own name. Though little disposed to pry into the secrets of any one, it did not occur to him that here he deviated from that cautious delicacy which he was accustomed to observe. The slender chance which there was of collecting a single complete sentence, seemed to preclude the necessity of imposing any restraint upon himself. What he saw ran thus, "Before I am numbered with the dead," there the flake was broken. Beneath, he perceived the words, "since you come not, I must attempt to unbosom myself by—" The flake was again defective. One or two sentences were so imperfect that

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he could not read more than a few unconnected words, but at what had been the termination of a page he distinctly saw this apostrophe, " O! Challoner, an awful surprise is at hand."

Extreme amazement came over him at finding such words which had thus strangely been brought before his eyes addressed to himself. The mysterious manner in which it announced " an awful surprise," made him especially desirous of knowing what had been added; and if he for a moment paused to determine whether he had a right to examine further, the reflection that the letter had been prepared for him, assured him that he had. Whatever Lady Maitland wished to reveal, it was far from improbable that she would not have an opportunity of doing it by speech. A few moments more, and the perishing fragment on which his eyes rested, must

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cease to exist. If not read instantly, it would be lost for ever. Urged by these considerations he hesitated no longer, but carefully removed the scrap from the fire. He flattered himself that he had succeeded, but it was necessary to turn it in order to reach the sequel, and this operation, though performed with the greatest caution, annihilated the frail remnant.

He looked on the crumbling record with regret, as sincere as vain. Infinitely embarrassed, he knew not what conclusion to draw. Lady Maitland had earnestly desired to see him, had strongly pressed his coming, and as he had learned from one of her domestics, had manifested impatience for his arrival, even under circumstances which might have been expected to exclude from her recollection every friend on earth. He recalled the anxiety which he had been informed

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she had evinced to see the papers destroyed. The agitation with which Lady Maitland had shrunk from his touch was also remarkable. Wishing as she did to communicate with him, some mark of satisfaction might have been expected, but for the thrill which had run through her wasted frame, he was not prepared to look.

There was one memorable period of his life which he was accustomed to recall on every occasion when the past was named. If aught of importance to him in former years were mentioned, he habitually applied himself to connect it with those days in which he was the lover of Emma. He could not help doing so now, but he strove to persuade himself that this ought not to be. It was true that the party then summoned to her account, had lived beneath the same roof with Emma, but what could she

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have to recount which there had not had been opportunities for imparting before? Above all, what "awful surprise" could await him from any detailed narrative of the misdeeds of one whose falsehood and whose death had long since been ascertained with equal certainty.

Reasoning against the first impression which had been produced on his mind, Challoner sought to establish an opinion that the surprise of which Lady Maitland had spoken, must arise from combinations which he was not in the habit of contemplating so frequently as those growing out of the miserable termination of his youthful love.

While his mind was thus engaged, he received a summons, which he had hardly dared to hope for, from the lady, who again desired his presence. He promptly obeyed, and stood by her bedside. Her features were composed, her

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eyes, now sunken and lustreless, were open, and a paleness sat on her hollow cheeks, so ghastly, that but for the slight movement of her lips, it might have been mistaken for the follower instead of the precursor of death.

How sad, yet how rich in melancholy interest are those moments in which a mortal of only moderate sensibility finds himself by the death-bed of one beloved! The dream-like recollection of past scenes, in which the prostrate sufferer before us acted a part in vigorous health, fitly associated with all the varieties of beautiful and blooming life, sheds deeper gloom on the terrible reality now contemplated. And when memory has thus performed her part, anticipation fails not to assist. We look on the wreck of loveliness with the appalling reflection, that even such as it has now become it cannot remain. We feel that

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in a few days it must pass away. That, bereft of consciousness, it will be no more in a state to converse with human beings than the couch on which it lies. We shudder at the thought that this is no brief state of being—that there is no return for the victim—that those now prodigal of their attentions to the languid sufferer, shall speedily be withdrawn, and the warm, peopled, and illuminated chamber, be exchanged for the coldness, solitude, and darkness of the grave. While we sorrow for those about to descend thither, the selfish, solemn thought intrudes that such also will be our own fate. Thus to think of ourselves may not ennoble, but it heightens the awful character of such moments; for though no remark is more commonplace than that death is inevitable, it is never so deeply felt as when we witness those appalling illustrations of our des-

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tiny, which are furnished by the last separation of friends.

Challoner was open to all the sombre reflections which the spectacle before him was fitted to inspire, and was slow to break the silence which prevailed when he entered. Lady Maitland first spoke.

"It would be a consolation," she sighed, "if indeed aught on earth could console the dying sinner before you, to see you here. I feared that you would not be able to arrive till my last hour had sounded, and was feebly attempting to convey to you in writing what I wished to disclose. But the effort was too much for me. My rapidly failing powers were unequal to the task of intelligibly committing to paper those facts which you may be interested in knowing."

"I am afflicted to see you thus," said Challoner. "On re-visiting my native

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land, I had hoped for a renewal of those soothing attentions which your friendship once bestowed on the most unhappy of men."

The lady attempted to interrupt him, but he proceeded.

"Trust me; while I remained a voluntary exile, that I might not witness the folly and brutality of the wretched bigots who have usurped the supreme power in England, I never forgot the generous zeal with which, in the plenitude of youth and beauty, Sophia laboured to calm those paroxysms of agony which sometimes hurried me to the verge of madness."

"O! speak not, speak not thus!" cried the lady. "Heretofore I could rejoice at hearing such language from your lips; but it is not in this terrible hour that I may derive satisfaction from it."

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"If I were to flatter you, Sophia, I feel that you might justly reprove. But such is not my purpose. I give you credit for no ideal merit, but merely acknowledge the most pure, the most unearthly kindness that ever demanded a tribute of admiration from the lips of man. When I thank you ——"

"You know not what you do," exclaimed the patient, who had before unsuccessfully attempted to check his speech.

"I would not pain your delicacy by a description of my feelings. I may, however, presume that I trespass not too much in briefly expressing my thankfulness to one whose compassion followed me through the most distressing years of my wretched existence."

"You torture me," the lady exclaimed, with a degree of energy which Challoner had not supposed she would

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ever have been able to resume, while her eyes sparkled with a terrifying lustre, in which the fires of frenzy were for a moment triumphant over the languor of disease and approaching dissolution. He was struck by her altered tone and manner, but had no time for speech ere she solemnly added, —

"Yes, kindly as they are intended, your words are the bitterest reproaches — are more fearful than the most laboured revilings which ingenious malevolence could frame. Alas! you owe me no gratitude. I have till now been a cheat, and have basely defrauded you of acknowledgments not my due — not my due, did I say! Would to God that were all; but, alas! they were the very opposite of what I deserved."

Astonished and confounded at what he heard, Challoner could not but suspect that sickness had bereft the suf-

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ferer of reason. She paused from exhaustion, and appeared rather calmer than before, and he now found an opportunity of saying,

"I cannot err, if I feel gratitude but for favours conferred on myself by those generous cares which —"

"Forbear, forbear," was the answering exclamation. "If you would show kindness, which I merit not, to the wretch before you in her dying hour, abstain from these persecuting praises, and let me, ere the last vestiges of sense and recollection have fled, attempt to execute the purpose for which I summoned you hither."

"You shall be obeyed, Sophia. I will be silent, and since you require it, forget that you ever could sympathise with inexpressible sorrow."

"Again you wound me by recalling past duplicity. Let the veil be at last

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removed. Look no longer on me as the disinterested friend who sought to mitigate the rigour of your fate; but view me as I am — the coldly cruel, the unrelenting author of all your woe."

"You rave, Sophia!"

"No Challoner, I speak but the language of truth. Humiliating as the confession is, my heart pants to make it. Till now, I have been most anxious to conceal the part I formerly acted, but I dare not leave the world oppressed with a load of unrevealed guilt. Oh, that earthly suffering could expiate it!"

Though Lady Maitland spoke with a wild eagerness, Challoner could not discover that her words were incoherent. A succession of strange and imperfectly-formed ideas rushed on his brain; and the recollection of that terrible night which had blasted all his hopes came with them. It was to that,

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and to that alone that he could suppose Lady Maitland's promised disclosure would relate. But how she could have caused that woe which sprung from the infidelity of another, was more than he could comprehend.

"Listen to me," said the lady. "I have yet a duty to perform, which, late as it is, I must endeavour to discharge. You, whatever the horror my narrative may inspire, are bound to listen to it. Listen then, listen—I dare not ask you to forgive."

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CHAP. XII.

What's earth? or in it,
That longer than a minute
Can lend a free delight that can endure?

QUARLES.

FILLED with wonder at what he had already heard, and trembling with emotion, Challoner awaited in silent horror the explanations which Lady Maitland had offered.

"Were the brief period of my existence less distinctly defined," she said, "I retain so much of the weakness and vanity of my sex, that I might hesitate where to commence my miserable story, and vex your ears with a detail of transactions connected, I might

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almost say, with infancy, to furnish, not a justification, but something like a reason for the course I unhappily pursued. But admonished by feelings not to be mistaken, that brevity is most needful, I shall at once speak of that period, when you and my ill-fated relation had become lovers.

"It was your lot, Challoner, not only to gain the heart of Emma; mine, also, you unconsciously won. Emma and myself had long been rivals; both were praised for attractions which were called extraordinary. The tribute of admiration which you offered to my cousin, wounded my pride, and too soon the love which I felt for you, and which, under other circumstances, would, I sincerely believe, have proved as generous as it was ardent, changed to hate the most fiery and unquenchable against the companion of my youth.

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"It seemed to you, that we met in England purely by accident. Such was not the case. With infinite cunning I had prepared that train of events which brought me here, and as it appeared threw me casually in your way. Absence from Emma, I flattered myself, would weaken the influence of her beauty; and at the same time I hoped the opportunities I found of being near you would give me advantages which must eventually secure a triumph over your affections. With such purpose, I had recourse to all the little arts which ingenuity could suggest, and meanness adopt. On this subject I need say no more. The sordid attentions which you have so often acknowledged with all the warmth of gratitude, though they deceived you, failed to serve me. It was then that I called in the too potent ally, calumny; but even

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this, cautiously used as it was at first, produced no impression; and it was not till the fatal night on which you last saw Emma, that I ventured on that horrid falsehood which separated two fond hearts, destined but for me, to have become one in blissful union."

"Sophia!" exclamed Challoner, "your senses wander. They dictate hideous fictions to your tongue, and torture you with self-accusations which it is impossible for you to have deserved."

"Notwithstanding all I have said, you think too favourably of me. You cannot think that a human being, much less a female, could perpetrate enormities like those which it is the business of this dreadful hour to reveal."

"Your language is so collected, that in spite of the extravagance of the self-imputed guilt, I might believe your me-

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mory still faithful to its duty, did not my own remind me too distinctly of the reality. If on your showing I had rashly believed Emma other than she had previously been, I might fear that I had been misled; but it was only from herself that I would receive conviction of her falsehood. To me, *to me* she confessed; and after that to doubt ——"

"Would have been wise; to believe her spotless and sincere, but justice."

"Impossible."

"You were the victim of diabolical cunning, which, in the midst of the murderous horrors of that night of blood, still retained its place in my bosom. Events favoured my artifice; I saw the labyrinth prepared; and the terrors of the innocent and the enormities of the guilty, furnished the materials for constructing a snare in which

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you became entangled, and Emma was lost."

"Cruel woman! let me still hope you wander from the truth."

"Would that I could hope so myself. But restrain your emotion so far that it may not preclude you from hearing the few words which I have to utter, and which will but too well explain how you were imposed upon, even by the guileless Emma."

Here weakness interrupted the narrator, she appeared to suffer acutely, but made another determined effort at speech.

"Shame and pain conspire to check my tongue; gladly would I hold my peace; but if now mute, my silence must be eternal. Though many years have since passed, you cannot have forgotten that some of the parties connected with

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the insurrection of 1641 indulged the insane hope of being able to annihilate the English name in Ireland. To attempt this, the more desperate bound themselves by horrid oaths; and to hold them fast to their engagements, an instrument was framed recording their resolution, each of the subscribers to which wrote his name in his own blood, that in the event of treachery, this awful testimony might witness against him.

"Emma had a sister who married an English gentleman. Mr. Raymond, so was he named, had withdrawn to the West of England to reside on his own estates immediately after his marriage. This was a short time before you were known to Emma. A series of misfortunes stripped him of the greater part of his property; and at the period to which I have called your attention, he visited Ireland with the purpose of re-

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siding there for some years. Mr. and Mrs. Raymond were in the same house with Emma, on the night when the rising took place. The massacre commenced. 'Death to the English!' was the cry of the revolted. Emma counselled her brother and sister to fly, as their recent arrival from England might bring on them the fury of the frantic conspirators. But the child was in the way. With him they could not hope to escape. Emma entreated them to fear nothing for the infant, as she would watch over him with a mother's love. There was little time for deliberation; murder was abroad, and, in all human probability, to pause was to perish. Mr. and Mrs. Raymond yielded to Emma's representations; they fled and left their child with her.

"It was but a short time after this that ruffians, armed and masked, entered the house, searched all the apartments,

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"But how?"

"As plainly as I now hear anything that you say."

"And have you forgotten, Challoner, in what shape you presented yourself to her?"

"I wore a mask."

"And you burst into a room at the moment when she expected an assassin, whose business it was to destroy the tender life she had promised to defend at the risk of her own."

"It is too true. Great God! how have I sinned! Oh Sophia! I would say nothing to aggravate the anguish which you experience. I would not inflict on the parting spirit one added pang; but the misery which your words have conveyed to my bosom beggars description. It urges me to madness. I must retire, or even now I shall reproach."

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"Reproach me — pour out the bitterness of spirit which I know you must feel. I shall die with more satisfaction from knowing that all my punishment is not reserved for a future state."

"May the Most High forgive his wretched creature! May thy crime be forgotten! Alas! I dare not hope that mine may also find oblivion."

"Your crime, Challoner!"

"Mine; for yours was venial, compared with the horrid transgression of which I stand convicted. That jealousy should seek to harm was natural, but that love should favour, adopt, and carry into execution its cruel resolves was monstrous. Why did I so rashly believe, or even suspect? Had not inherent baseness rendered me incapable of appreciating the purity I gazed upon, I had not barbarously turned from the lovely one."

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"Grief misleads you, Challoner; but I feel I can no more —"

While speaking, Lady Maitland sunk down. Her eyes closed. They re-opened, and her gaze was fixed on her visitor. Challoner was about to speak, when she by a slight motion of her hand entreated silence.

"This disclosure," she said, "is painful. But I desired most earnestly to make it. Though late, it may yield some imperfect consolation."

"Imperfect indeed! for what reparation can be made to the victim of murder?"

At the word murder, Lady Maitland started, or rather shrunk, with an expression of indescribable horror.

With much difficulty, she resumed. "You now recall one important fact. With respect to the circumstances under which

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you found the child, you were again deceived."

"In what?"

"In supposing that Emma was —— I cannot ——"

And here the unfinished sentence on her lips, she again lost the power of utterance. He waited, hoping to see her revive, but he waited in vain. To him it appeared that she had breathed her last. Her female attendants entered, and he withdrew to the room in which he had previously rested. In a few moments his apprehensions were confirmed, and it was announced that their Lady was no more.

The tidings were too accurately anticipated by Challoner, to create surprise. He raised his eyes towards heaven, to implore forgiveness for the guilty spirit which was then summoned to its last awful account. But it struck him, that to

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do so were an act of presumption, which could nothing benefit the deceased. Oppressed as he was with the thought that his own unworthy suspicions had refused Emma the succour which he might have afforded in the hour of danger, withholding of which had caused her to be included in the frightful massacre then in progress, he sincerely feared that to petition for himself would be unavailing; but to pray for another, he judged was to arrogate to himself a degree of influence with heaven, to which it would be worse than folly to pretend.

And while his mind was thus disturbed, he sadly recalled the statements to which he had just listened, and attempted to compare them with the facts, such as he remembered them, to which they referred. He could find no excuse for his own conduct in the artful misrepresentations of which he had been the victim. Mean-

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ness and suspicion, and finally the most horrible cruelty, he believed to attach to his having credited the perfidious falsehoods by which he had been abused. At all events, he considered he ought to have offered Emma his protection, till the perils which surrounded her were past. Not to have done this, seemed to him acting a ferocious and an unmanly part; and thus accusing himself, he forgot that when he heard Emma, as he thought, avow herself a mother, he was not informed of the danger to which she was exposed.

Then his mind turned to the extreme anxiety which Lady Maitland had evinced to communicate something which had previously escaped her recollection, and which related to his finding the child. He deeply lamented that she had not spoken sooner on this subject. Her manner, while she gave the assurance

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that there "he had been again deceived," was full of mysterious intelligence. But what deception could have been practised upon him, where he himself was the only living actor, the child excepted, which certainly was incapable of deceit? He had left Emma with the infant in her arms. Chance had conducted him to her mangled remains, and from her cold embrace he had snatched the surviving object of her care. What possible fraud could have been attempted in all this? He was quite sure that, distracted as he was on that night, his wanderings had been directed by chance, and not by Sophia, to the spot where the corpse reposed. It was clear that he had been wrong in supposing Albert the child of Emma. This, Lady Maitland had stated, yet this was all which he could imagine she had to impart, when she seemed most desirous

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that life might be prolonged for a few seconds. It appeared not extremely improbable, that in the moment of death, her failing intellects should have suggested the fact as important to be mentioned, though what had fallen from her before rendered it superfluous.

Tortured and perplexed with sad reflections and fruitless conjectures, he bestowed one parting glance on the lifeless form of Lady Maitland, and retired, envying her the repose which seemed to be hers, yet shuddering to contemplate the awful state on which the unprepared spirit had been compelled to enter. He mounted his horse without speaking, and left the mansion in which he had witnessed a spectacle so appalling, and listened to disclosures so heart-rending, without having formed any resolution whither to go. His horse decided for returning to London, and Robert

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concluding such to be the intention of his master, did not annoy him with enquiries. Challoner thought not of the road, or of any thing that affected himself, but his whole soul was engrossed by a new subject for reflection; the situation in which he then stood, and that in which he must thereafter stand with respect to Albert. His feelings, so far as the youth was concerned, had undergone a most important change. Humanity had always made him take a lively interest in his fate. If the circumstances of his birth, and reluctance to encounter too frequently the living memorial of the depravity he mourned, had lately disposed him to object to an union between Albert and Celia Lesley, he could now do so no longer. With deep regret for his own precipitation, all his former tenderness for Emma had revived.

"But, alas!" he sighed, "my error

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is not to be repaired! My idly-breathed sorrows cannot soothe the heart which has long slumbered in the stillness of death. This is sad,— but there remains one who was near to her,— to her love for whom she sacrificed herself. The valued pledge confided to my care, when murder had bereft it of hers, shall now be all but as dear to me as she who gave it would have been. Albert I live but for you."

His thoughts had involuntarily shaped themselves into words. The sound of his voice was heard by Robert, who now approached, and desired to know if it was to him that Challoner had designed to address himself.

"No, Robert," was the answer; "I spoke but to myself. With another I am at present little fitted to converse."

"Marry, Sir, make no apology about

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your unfitness for talk, if you are disposed to indulge in conversation; but I judge, so please you, the true meaning of your speech is, that you are not anxious for company."

"That is my meaning."

"Then, Sir, I may not intrude idle queries, but as it is now past nightfall, I would ask where you would choose to halt."

"I care not."

"Nor I, much; but seeing the road to London is lonely, and the way not good, were it not better that we presently seek for a resting-place?"

"A resting-place, Robert! I fear me, you can find none for me."

"Oh! but methinks I can, and that speedily, for your comfort."

"You mean an inn."

"That is the identical thing of which

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I speak; and be it known to your honour that we are now about entering Brentford, where that venerable knave whom you conversed with to-day holds his sign of the Three Pigeons. I marked it as we passed through, thinking the place not worse than any other trap for travellers of that sort. Shall I point it out to you when we arrive?"

"I think not; riotous merriment will probably be there, and this I cannot brook to night."

"Methinks, Sir, here your judgment is out at elbows. The vagabondisings in Red Bull Alley were not to reach conclusion till near six of the clock. Suppering would then detain the party some considerable time, and tippling, perhaps, after that; so it is not unlikely that they will abide there, or in the neighbourhood, all night."

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"It may so fall out, Robert, so do as you will."

Robert considering the matter as settled, made no reply, and they rode on in silence.

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CHAP. XIII.

Among other things they brought me some hazel nuts, which I put into a box, and sometimes I used to crack and eat of them. In the night time my gentleman, the devil, came and got the nuts out of the box, and cracked them against one of the bed-posts.

LUTHER's *Table Talk*.

WHEN Albert retreated somewhat hastily from the society of Challoner, Lowen, and James Thorpe, at Islington, he repaired with little loss of time to a house in the Old Jewry, at which the senior Thorpe had desired that he would meet him. The cause of the unexpected summons which he had received was thus unfolded.

"I have craved to see you, young man, because I have been informed that you, on the last night but one, when I supposed you to be no nearer than London,

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were really at St. Alban's; and farther, that you visited the horrid being, whose diabolical arts have for years occasioned me so much loss and suffering."

Amazed at this address, Albert assured the speaker that he had not approached St. Alban's since with his knowledge and consent, he had left that city for London.

"This confounds me," said Thorpe; "for I have been told by a prudent and discreet man, that one of my sons had been seen issuing from the very den of that emissary of Satan. Now as James never was known to seek her in his life, and you have admitted that on sundry occasions you scrupled not to converse with her, I doubted not that the tale thus brought to me related to you. If it be so, deny it not, as I am prepared on the strength of dreadful sights, beheld with my own eyes on that selfsame night, to forewarn you of the

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peril to which you expose yourself seeking such society."

Again Albert declared that the report was to the best of his belief without foundation. The adventure of James had not been made known to him, and had he been so disposed, he had no means of giving the explanation of which Thorpe stood in need, to account for what had been told.

"I am glad," said Thorpe, "to hear that you have not been there so lately. Would to God you had never seen her!"

"Indeed, Sir, I think you have slight cause to regret any communication which I have had with the female you suppose to be a witch. I am not without hopes that you will, ere long, change your opinion in this matter. I once, being at the time a boy, pursued her with causeless irrational hatred. She was then not so

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much arraigned by common report for her witchcraft, as for being reputed to be an old maid. I threw stones first at her cottage, and then when she presented herself to expostulate with me, or to intreat forbearance, I added to the outrage, and aimed at her. One stone, I remember, struck her bosom. I saw a tear fall from her eye while to escape further insult she turned to re-enter her dwelling, and it awoke me to remorse."

"There you were wrong. It was no unamiable weakness on your part; but remorse ought not to be felt for inflicting punishment on a witch."

"If the offence with which she is charged be a grave one, it is not to the disorderly hand of a giddy boy that its punishment ought to be left."

"True; a stronger arm ought to be put forth where the occasion is so pressing."

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"I know not that, but when moved with pity, I had followed, secretly wishing I could do away the remembrance of the injury, she looked round with a countenance so full of sorrow, but so free from the resentment which I merited, that, not to have saved my own life, could I again have assailed her."

"You were duped."

"Sir, my heart told me I had sinned against one who had never sought to offend me; and my eyes informed me that the object of my persecution was as patient and forgiving as I had been rash and cruel. My tears answered hers. She saw my contrition, and the opportunities which I subsequently had of conversing with her, only confirmed the first impression which her gentleness made."

"And will you retain that impression now, when I state to you, that through

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the last four-and-twenty hours I have sustained the most intolerable torture, of which, I doubt not, she, and she alone, is the cause?"

"Indeed!"

"I speak the truth — what profit should it be to me falsely to charge another?"

"But you may err in judgment."

"No, the evil is too palpable, is too indubitable to admit of question. You will shudder when I tell you, that at this moment my figure in wax is roasting before the fire of that accursed hag, to the end that, as that dissolves, my body may waste and finally perish."

"Pardon me, Sir; but I must hope that in this you are misinformed."

"Alas! Albert, I could wish it, but to hope it is impossible."

"And why, Sir? — why do you suppose that such practices are resorted to

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for the purpose of bringing about your destruction?"

"Because I know the diabolical arts which the devil teaches those who are of his elect, to practise against mankind. You are ignorant of them, and can scarcely credit what I tell; but the sensations which now agonize my wretched frame, place it past all doubt that I am in the miserable situation which I have described."

"Pray, Sir, do not rashly act on this idea."

"I will do nothing, Albert, that may justly merit reproof as being rash. To guard against such misdoings, you now see me here. As that most useful auxiliary of justice, the pious Master Matthew Hopkins, could not, by reason of the important labours which engage him in this great and sinful town, forthwith repair to me at my home, I resolved to

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come hither for the purpose of being resolved by him, whether the maladies or grievances which now affect my health be the work of hell, or merely those visitations of nature to which mortal man ought to submit with religious patience and humble resignation."

"I hope you will not have to regret the journey you have made. From what fame reports, it should seem that Hopkins is a man of some skill. Much experience he undoubtedly has, and this will, I flatter myself, enable him to assure you that you have been causelessly alarmed."

"It cannot be. Could you experience what I endure, you would not speak thus; but faithful to the resolution which I have avowed, I will listen to what the highly gifted Master Matthew Hopkins may state, with a sincere desire to learn that I have been mistaken."

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"But when shall you see him?"

"This very hour — nay, this minute. At the earnest solicitation of my friend Peter Abney, in whose house we now meet, he vouchsafed me half an hour of his valuable time. We have already exchanged salutations. He has but stepped into another room to take refreshment, and give me leisure to collect my thoughts. I now hear him returning — he is here."

And the celebrated "witch-finder general" as he styled himself, and wished to be styled by others, Matthew Hopkins, now entered. He was a man of middle stature, with a countenance remarkably sallow, which was decorated with not a few festering pimples, the offspring of the continued good cheer to which his suddenly-discovered talent for witch-finding had introduced him. He wore a black beard, and his eye-

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brows were knitted into an habitual frown, which he endeavoured to pass on those whom he encountered for the gravity of profound thought and solemn meditation.

He bestowed little of his notice on Albert, conceiving, no doubt, that the eminence which he had attained, exempted him from the necessity of attending very minutely to the forms of ordinary civility. Seating himself without loss of time, he commenced, without attending to the few words which Thorpe attempted to utter, explanatory of the presence of a third person.

"And so, friend, the family of Lucifer you find troublesome neighbours. Before I had tidings of you, I had learned that that part of the country stood much in need of my aid; but the potent calls on me elsewhere, made it impossible to go thither for any reasonable time, and

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to begin to root out witchcraft without going through with the work, would only be tantalising the sufferers, and flattering the devil, by making him think that he had in some sort baffled me. These matters induced me to defer my coming for a season, and kept me from holding converse with any one of the inhabitants of that vicinity."

Thorpe here very humbly expressed his satisfaction and gratitude at the goodness of Mr. Hopkins in consenting to see him.

"Spare thanks," was the remark which this conduct called forth. "Thanks are but air, and you of course, knowing, as you must know, that I sustain no trifling loss by delaying here for your easement, are prepared with a different manner of acknowledgement."

A pretty broad hint was conveyed by these words, but a still more potent one

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was given by the look and action which accompanied them. Thorpe was not so deficient in capacity as to fail to understand the appeal, and five *spur rials* were speedily produced from his pocket.

"These five pieces of gold," said he, "if you will receive them straight, I should wish to offer as a small ——"

"As a small beginning," said the witch-finder, obligingly supplying a finish to the sentence which Thorpe had commenced, and at the same time receiving and depositing the money in a secure receptacle beneath his cloak, with great expedition and dexterity.

"And now, Sir, I would ask," said Thorpe, in a more assured tone than he had previously used, considering, perhaps, the gracious reception of his money a mark of condescension which invited freedom of conversation.

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"Hold," cried Hopkins, "it is I must ask you questions, for you are not to catechise me. You suffer from witchcraft you say, and you know the party, I trow?"

"So I believe."

"Nay, if you only believe, why came you to me? Did I not send you, by letter, instructions how you might assuredly know where the witch, your foe, should be found? Now, if having used the methods I commended, you still question my verity, why seek you me at all Master Thorpe? answer me that."

"Because, profound Sir, it calamitously fortuned, that those to whom I gave it in charge to send forth the cow in manner directed, forgot the day which had been named, and used the means you prescribed for Friday on a Thursday."

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"Nay, how can you hope to thrive, if you blunder thus? Stands it not to reason and common sense, since you cannot see nor touch to-morrow, while yet it is but to-day, that that which may prove (*Deo juvante*) most potent at one time shall be utterly powerless, and have none effect at another?"

"This did I feel, and much do I wish to know if the charm still hold good, or whether its virtue expired on that very Friday on which it ought to have been experimented."

"Marry, Master Thorpe, as I am not one of those who would cozen men out of their money, rendering them no benefit in return, the directions which I sped to you were of that passing value, that even time, which mangles most things, can nothing harm them, and they are even now as good as they were on the day when they were but newly written."

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"That glads me."

"So it ought; for look you, not only shall that which you have solace you through your natural life, but it may be a very treasure to your children and all your posterity in future times. You should be careful, not to have it commonly reported that you have such a matter in your possession, for all the witches in the country knowing their danger, shall, in that case, be apt to seek your life."

"Of this I have had my fears, and I would know if a preventive against their malice may be furnished in the interim."

"Your house, of course, has a horse-shoe nailed *by the door way*."

"It has."

"Some *eringo* roots carried about your person may be of benefit; but rightly guessing that you might stand in need of something still more potent, I have

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brought with me a sample of *fuga dæmonium*, which I have prepared with infinite care and trouble, and which will put the devil upon taking to his heels. Many years of study were needed to bring this to perfection, but you shall have it gratis; that is, simply paying a *rose rial* for the costly herbs brought from Mount Calvary and Mesopotamia, of which it is composed. Take it."

Thorpe received this valuable present, consisting of a powder made from the herb called *St. John's wort*, chalk dust, and common earth, with much gratitude, and produced the money as promptly as Hopkins could have desired.

"Understand well what is the value of that which I have now, without thought of fee, profit, or reward, put into your keeping. This will make demons avoid you, for knowing you thus prepared, they shall not dare to approach, well

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foreseeing that their malice would be impotent, as this would speedily turn the points of their talons. Some teach, that to inhale smoke from the burning tooth of a dead man, having first anointed the whole frame with the gall of a crow, will answer the purpose; but this experience has proved to be of no avail."

"And do you imagine, Sir, that evil spirits can assail mortals thus sensibly, if no precautions like one of those you commend were taken?"

This question from Albert called forth a look of ineffable contempt from Hopkins, who promptly replied, —

"I suppose nothing in the matter. I speak but of that which is well known, and has in many cases been brought to the very proof. Is it not on record, how a certain wizard sent evil spirits to kill the *holy Ambrose*, which, they being baffled, as there is good reason to guess,

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by semblable means to those which I employ, returned for answer, '*That God had hedged him in as he did Job?*'"

"I have not read of it."

"But you have read, or your education has been much neglected, how the devil went to attack the pious Martin Luther, whose very nuts he ventured to steal. The good man, it is said, put Satan to flight by using the words *Omnia subjecisti pedibus ejus*, but I warrant he was too prudent not to be armed with some effectual preparation like to this of mine besides."

"This does not appear. Prayer and confidence in the Supreme Being, I have always understood, were the only weapons which Luther thought it necessary to oppose to the prince of darkness."

"But if it has pleased God to bless mortals by discovering to them the latent virtues of divers potent herbs, and

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other substances, is it well that faith and prayer should be left wholly to themselves, where such aids are procurable?"

"It might seem presuming in me to question aught that you have advanced, but I have heard men who are counted both pious and sensible, as well as learned, doubt that spirits, emissaries of Satan I mean, could trouble the earth or the air at all."

"Then must I unfold to you that such learned men, may claim of right the most glorious prize to which princely ignorance would be entitled. This do I advance, not on my own simple authority, which some have thought might be relied upon in such matters, but on the concurring testimony of *Marcus the Eremite*, who was deemed most skilful in his day, and *Hallywell*, no mean person neither. These both assert, nor has it

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till now been questioned, that not only do evil spirits infest the earth and air, but also the water, and that there are no fewer than six varieties."

"So I have heard," said Thorpe.

"*Leluron*, that is, nocturnal fire, is the name of the first class, which may be found on the top of the airy region, but still much beneath the moon; the second are nearer to the earth; the third, which are terrestrial, reside on the earth, and these are those against whom the means which I have recommended are mainly directed, for they are fearful enemies of our race; the fourth haunt the waters—they create whirlpools in rivers, and raise storms by sea, to the destruction of many vessels and mariners."

"And where may the fifth be found," enquired Thorpe.

"In caverns and ruins; these signify their presence by pestilential damps, and

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sometimes by suphureous flame, springing direct from the deep abyss of hell; and the last, which sometimes go hand in hand with the third, are the light-hating ghosts, who are fond of night-walking, and striking all things they meet with cold passions."

"This," said Albert, "if it be so, is indeed a terrible array of immortal power against human weakness. Yet, methinks, it seems incredible that the beneficent Author of creation should have left the noblest work of his hand thus exposed to the machinations of those who had previously rebelled against his power."

"Nor are they so exposed, without the means being provided for guarding against the danger, and punishing the guilty mortals who sell themselves to hell and take the devil's sacrament."

"Mark you that," said Thorpe. "This I told you before, but you little heeded

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it. The witches are introduced to the chief of hell commonly on a Sunday night, the prince of devils sitting on a throne of earthly majesty, in the form of a man."

"Save his cloven foot," Hopkins remarked, "which he is evermore trying to hide. The witch then offering herself must be re-baptised in the name of Satan, which done, he is very busy with his long nails in scratching out all traces of the cross on the forehead, imprinted at the true baptismal ceremony, in place of which he impresses (so as not to be seen of men however,) the mark of the beast. An oil or ointment is made from the flesh of unbaptised living infants, part of this they swallow, and with the rest anoint; and having vowed both body and soul to the devil, they defy Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; upon which their familiars are appointed to them."

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"You, Sir," said Albert, "may believe all this, but offend as it may, I must say I credit not the existence of such abominations, nor do I see, supposing they were possible, how they could be known."

"Why then, I will tell you. We know it from the confessions of those who have been convicted of witchcraft. We know it from Scripture, and pagan authors have confirmed the fact."

"I know Horace speaks of witches, but he derides *Canidia* with such unsparing mockery, as could not be expected from one who had faith in the powers with which they are supposed to be endowed."

"But history jests not on these matters. Not to go back to proceedings of remote date, think you parliament designed to indulge in idle pleasantry, when the act of 1541 passed against

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conjuration, witchcraft, and sorcery. Think you Cranmer meant to be merry, when in his 'Articles of Visitation,' he directed enquiry after 'any that used charms, sorcery, enchantments, witchcraft, soothsaying, or any like craft invented by the devil?' He, methinks, was a man of some knowledge and capacity, as well as gravity. Was the statute of 1562, for the punishment of witchcraft, a jocular piece of legislation?"

"That I mean not to assert; but even legislators may be misled."

"Or was the more recent as well as more important act, which passed in 1603, to be so esteemed, which enumerates the very crimes which the Sadducees of our time would fain persuade people simple enough to give ear to their delusions are impossible?"

"I am not acquainted with the laws you mention, but doubt not —"

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"Nay," cried Hopkins, too warm with the subject to wait for the conclusion of the sentence, "to doubt shall be impossible; for, as you shall see with your own eyes, the statute directed against such unlawful practices, runs thus, denouncing any who 'shall use, practise, or exercise any invocation or any conjuration of any evil or wicked spirit, to or for any intent or purpose; or consult, covenant with, entertain or employ, feed or reward any evil or wicked spirit, to or for any intent or purpose; or take up any dead man, woman, or child, out of his, her, or their grave, or any other place where the dead body resteth; or the skin, bone, or other part of any dead person to be employed or used in any manner of witchcraft, sorcery, charm, or enchantment; or shall use, practise, or exercise any witchcraft, sorcery, charm, or enchantment, whereby any person

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shall be killed, destroyed, wasted, consumed, or lamed in his or her body, or any part thereof, such offender shall suffer death.' "

"What can you say to that, Albert?" demanded Thorpe.

"I certainly cannot doubt that it has been believed such things were. This Mr. Hopkins has established most certainly."

"But," cried the witch-finder, "you would have it credited that our ancestors of the time of Queen Elizabeth and King James, who, it has been thought by many, were no fools, did not know what laws were necessary for the well-being of this realm of England. You, forsooth, would lament that the Sadducees of the present day then lived not to instruct them."

"Truly, Albert," said Thorpe, "methinks it were no easy task to answer this. To suppose that kings, parlia-

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ments, bishops, judges, juries, prosecutors, witnesses, and confessing criminals, have all been totally in error, were too much."

Albert saw that reason with Mr. Thorpe and the witch-finder had no effect but to embarrass the former, and irritate the latter, and declined pressing on them more forcibly those opinions which he could not bring himself to abandon.

Thorpe went on. "Yet why should I argue this matter, when my own feelings bring terrible conviction that such practices are now carried on. You must know, learned Sir," he proceeded, addressing himself to Hopkins, "that of late I have been subject to frequent heats, most intolerable in their nature, at divers times and seasons."

"Indeed! Say you so?"

"This leads me to conclude that my

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waxen effigy has been put down to roast before the witch's fire."

"And truth to say, a most shrewd and sensible conjecture. Feel you not a sort of unseemly dew upon your person?"

"I do."

"Accompanied with much terror?"

"Yes, and in proportion as the alarm is great, the dew increases, and no exertion that I can make will shake it off."

"You say right; the more you bestir yourself, the greater it shall become. Nay, Master Thorpe, this is no common case of yours, your person being, as it were, already in the hands of the enemy. I shall enquire into this most speedily. In a very few days I will seek you at your residence. If she you suspect be the true witch, I shall, perchance, put a stop to her devil's doings, before your frame shall be much more wasted

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than it is at this present time; and now, as my concerns call me hence for the present fare you well."

The Witch-finder then withdrew. Thorpe having received confirmation of all he dreaded, and thus, as it were, obtained license to be miserable, was perfectly satified with the result of their interview, while he glowed with impatience to resume those proceedings which he flattered himself would terminate in bringing Dame Neville to condign punishment, and prove the means of snatching him from that diabolical influence of which he supposed himself to be the victim.

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CHAP. XIV.

——— He keeps all in awe,
Jests like a licensed fool, commands like law.
DR. DONNE.

AT the Three Pigeons, Challoner retired to bed, but not to rest, soon after his arrival. He had directed Robert to apprise him of the coming of Albert, if he should accompany Lowen on his return from the Red Bull, and in the event of his not doing so, he charged him to make enquiry of the veteran, or of James Thorpe, who was expected to be his companion, where he could be found.

Robert remained in the principal room of the inn till eleven o'clock, when judging those who were looked for

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would not arrive that night, he went to bed.

It was scarcely six o'clock when he was again at his post, and before seven, Lowen, Green, and James Thorpe made their appearance. They had been detained by feasting and convivial amusements till the evening was somewhat advanced, when, in consequence of the age and infirmities of Lowen, added to the circumstance of the tide being against them, (the party intending to go to Brentford by water,) it was determined that their departure should be postponed till the morning. The old actor had taken his wonted rest, but James and Green, with others, had remained up during the night.

"What old Bluff," cried James, observing Robert, "are your here? Why I can hardly believe my eyes. Do they really tell the truth? In revenge for

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being kept open all night, I suspect them of a lie; speak, is it so?"

"No, they are not yet so corrupted by the example of their misbehaving neighbour, as to deceive by untrue representations."

"Misbehaving neighbour! What's that? Elucidate; for it is not every fool can understand your drift."

"So I perceive. All I meant to say was, your eyes have not taken a lesson from your tongue."

"That's more than I know, for they make you look like a tolerably honest piece of unseemly rubbish, which my tongue has reported. But what have you to do here; come you to spy on me?"

"Not I; why should I deem you worth looking after? I but want to ask where I may find young Master Albert."

"What! seek you Rhapsody? Mayhap

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you want him to write an epithalamium on your marriage."

"Mayhap I am going on no such fool's errand."

"Or a sonnet to your mistress, or an ode on your birth-day; or do you wish to be provided with a dainty set of neck verses?"

"Marry, Master Thorpe," cried Green, preparing for a speech of remonstrance in favour of Robert, whom he regarded as dealt somewhat hardly by,—"why indulge you these humours at the cost of a civil and moderately well-spoken man?"

"What know you of good speech, I would fain learn? Have you so far blundered, because your parrot-like repetition of '*et tu quoque*,' in conjunction with that living volume of cruel satires on humanity, thy person, provokes mirth from those who cannot feel for the de-

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gradation of their species, that you mistake yourself for a person of moderate judgment?"

"Your tongue," Green answered, "ambles merrily this morning; methinks you have swallowed rather more of wine than assorts with the little discretion you commonly wear."

"You remind me that I am thirsty. Come, as the wearer of an ugly mask ought to be handsomely paid, see a bottle of sack brought in forthwith."

"Nay, you have had sufficient."

"The air of the morning on the river was cold and watery, therefore get me wine. Know you not that to drink is philosophy, for it is only after full libations that a man can truly see how things really are, as it is only then that he can perceive the world goes round."

"Well, since advice is of no avail—"

"A veil! what talk you of a veil?

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yet I will not blame. A veil may well suit you. Get one, and wear it, for the comfort both of those who are now, and who shall be hereafter."

"Your wit begins to run low," Green retorted, "since you can only play on a word. A literal joke is —"

"Is *literally* too good for dunces; truly it is well for such as you and Lowen to object to a turn of that sort. Husks are fit food for hogs, and small quiddities meet entertainment for lack-wits. What, forsooth, shall beggars in mind, like you, while starving for a grain of merriment, flout when I fling you a pancake, and turn up your noses because it is not a pudding?"

"But the giving two significations to a word is not worth the price of a pancake, and is only the modern substitute for wit."

"Let not dolts of your small know-

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ledge say this. Old Jack Lowen can tell that Will Shakspeare objected not to a pun; he knew it entitled to respect, if but for its antiquity, for he perchance had heard that *Cicero* was a punster."

"How so?"

"Why thus: when a matron of prudence had liberally obliged Caius Julius Cæsar with the services of her daughter *Tertia*, it being remarked that Servilia, the mother, had purchased lands from the Dictator on cheap terms; 'Yea,' quoth Cicero, 'she hath a good pennyworth, but *Tertia deducta est.*' So much for your modern substitute for wit. Now, but that I have some touch of pity for thee, I would bid thee look in the glass (but it would be too cruel to make thee inspect thine own countenance), to see what an ass thou appearest."

"'Sblood," exclaimed Lowen, "you

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are as rantipolish now as you were last night, while attired as the *ward* in our tragedy, you made the gazers laugh at 'Women, Beware of Women.'"

"They did not laugh three years ago at your haltings as *Fabritio*."

"Did they weep?"

"The candles from their hoops above did weep tallow tears, to see so hoary a fool beneath."

"I thought my turn was coming," said Lowen, folding his arms with an air of patient expectation; "go on; let us hear what you have to say of me."

"Why, what can I have to say to you, you last century's almanack of folly; you ante-dated record of iniquity, you spent-ball, you unstrung fiddle, you pump without a handle.!"

"Go on."

"It may not be; I cannot throw a straw so far as I might a stone; there

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is no grappling with the report of a discharged popgun, or, or —"

"Ay, or what else?"

"Or the forlorn straggling smoke of a snuffed-out candle."

"Go on, you cannot fret me."

"No, you are like a tinder-box that has been in the rain; there is no carrying a spark to you; but never keep your arms folded across, and your head so knowingly shrunk down between them, unless you expect Master Chiswell the tombstone cutter here to carve out the resemblance of your skull and cross bones, as decorations for the parish charnel-house."

"Does the thinness of my face offend?"

"Not the thinness of thy face alone, but that coupled with the thickness of thy head. Age, when it borrows a man's teeth, commonly makes free with

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his brains. What pity it is you did not shed your tongue with your teeth, that you might not corrupt the rising generation by counsel, when you could no longer do it by example."

"My counsel has nothing harmed you, methinks."

"True, my patriarch of evil, eldest born of Satan. I am naturally too precocious in the way of sin to require tuition. Had it been otherwise, thou wouldest have supplied it. But come, my original Hamlet, original sin I would say, let us have wine."

"Your prattle makes you thirsty."

"Your dullness is a dry subject, and in this way you are worth the price of a pickled herring."

"That is more than the value of your jest, which long since sported by Will Kempe, resembles a herring in this, that

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it has been put by dried, but is unlike it, for that it has no salt."

"O, as to that, we jokers of to-day look for no encouragement from you critics of yesterday. Every thing with you is either second-hand or worthless. You know you always love to celebrate men whose superiority must have been great to make up for your insignificance."

"Why," said Lowen, "men have been seen by me who need not turn their backs for any who now live; and for myself, I might say that once I was a man ——"

"All the better for your wife."

"I say I was a man, that ——"

"—— 'That take you all in all
We shall not look upon your like again.'

No; nor desire to look upon it, I warrant. But here comes your wine, which

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at all events is not superannuated if you are. And now, while the loin of mutton is getting ready which you promised us for breakfast, I will give you, in good cavalier fashion, 'The restoration of the stage.' Drink it, Green, but do not look at it, for the stage is intended 'to hold as 'twere the mirror up to nature;' so you had as good turn your face another way."

"Methinks of that we have had enough."

"More than enough of thy face, Tom, if we had seen it but once, and that with only half an eye."

"Then you need not go on against it now."

"I go against your face?—I would not let a horse of mine go against it, for fear of his taking fright thereat. But come, old Lowen, forget not why you brought me to Brentford. Where are

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the curiosities which villanous death, by carrying off tolerable men, has put into your keeping?"

"These I brought forth," said Lowen, "at the commencement of your foolery, but as you would not hear of them, I care not to show them now."

"Nay, never speak to me in that grave croaking Queen Elizabeth's-regin-original-Hamlet Globe-spouting tone, but be the gay, garrulous old blockhead I have hitherto known thee, and pour forth thy ripe and mellow nonsense as theretofore, which, flattery apart, makes thee no unfit companion for fools thy juniors by half a century."

"What," cried Lowen, taking up the tone of raillery, which James seemed willing to abandon, "do you think such a sample of callow imprudence as you are, can touch me, the contemporary of Taylor, of Burbage, of Hemmings, and of

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Shakspeare? Never think it; we players yield not to inferiors."

"Inferiors!" exclaimed James.

"Ay," returned Lowen, "for our rank is by law established, while you, aiming to become an actor, are but a would-be vagabond. But not to dwell too hard on thy nothingness; here are the things which you covet to behold. This is the first copy which the players had of 'If this be not a good Play, the Divel is in it.' This, poor Tom Dekker gave to me, together with part of 'Truth's Supplication to Candlelight,' which quoth Tom, 'I wrote while I was in the Poultry Compter, in the queen's time.'"

"There it is," said James; "you see we men of genius are often without a home, while muddling knaves, like you, are permitted to inhabit good weather-defying houses. But is it certain that

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Dekker went to that home of genius, the Compter, for poverty?"

"Have you a doubt? why then look at close-fish, skin-flint-Henchlowe (as we use to dub him), his memorandum of the sum advanced to get him out."

Here Lowen produced a scrap of paper on which was written: —

"Lent unto the company, the 4th of February, 1598, to discharge Mr. Dekker out of the Cownter in the Poultry, the sum of fortie shillings, I say dd. to Thomas Downton xxxxs."

"But what," demanded James, "means dd?"

"Why, 'delivered' to be sure."

"Nor was Tom the only one of our good playwrights who was thus unhappy. Know you not poor Ben was borne down by want? He and Dekker, though they used much to abuse each other, were content at times to row in the same boat,

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and that they were not over wealthy, another of Henchlowe's scraps shall testify."

"What says it?"

"Listen," cried Lowen, while he proceeded to read a document which he had drawn forth, the wording of which was as follows: —

"Lent unto William Borne, alias Birde, the 4th of December, 1602 to lend unto Bengemyn Johnson and Thomas Dekker in earnest of ther booke which they are a writing called 'Pagge of Plim,' the some of xxxxs."

"Have you more?" James demanded.

"Here," said the veteran, "is the full history of the scrape into which several of the playing fraternity got sometime in 1624, when the king, by my Lord Conway made it known that the Spanish Ambassador had complained of a scandalous comedy, acted by the king's play-

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ers, in which they had represented the persons of the *King of Spain* and *the Conde de Gondomar*, order having been given before that no modern Christian kings should be personated in stage plays. Thereupon the lords of the council were commanded to call before them the poet that made the play, the players that acted it, and also he who licensed it, in order to report what punishment they should suffer. These, however, are too long for you to peruse, before you fall to on the loin of mutton, which is now about to come in for breakfast."

"Why, truly, when I look at the bundle of transmogrified rag called paper which thou cuddlest there, I incline to thy way of thinking. It would be ill to endure present hunger, while reading of past starvation."

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"Nay, what with making and mending, he did not starve."

"Making and mending! why you speak of Tom as if he were a cobbler."

"So he was, of plays, for here is a remembrancer of forty shillings which were paid to him for 'mending the playe of *Tasso*.'"

"You said you remembered all his plays being first given to the town."

"To be sure I do, and many have I acted in. Tom had a good taste in acting, but aspired not to act himself."

"How then did he show his fine taste?"

"By praising those who did well."

"Jack Lowen for one."

"Even so. Ofttimes has he said, by such and such a speech, 'thou hast done better than I did;' meaning thereby that my repetition gave it intelligence and beauty which before were not."

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"Was he ever fond of cramming turkeys?"

"Not that I know."

"That he could fill a goose, is clear from the alacrity with which you sucked down flattery that would have choked a bird of another feather."

"Perhaps, had you seen me then, you had not deemed it flattery. I am not what I was."

"Why that I believe. It is scarcely fair to judge of a play by its epilogue. I can easily conceive you might have been vastly superior to what you are, without being tolerable. What were the speeches which so pleased him?"

"Many which I could recount, but one especially delighted him in his play, 'The Wonder of a Kingdom,' which I have often repeated since from my own feelings."

"Nay, then, say it now."

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" Thus it set forth : —

' He that in riotous feasting wastes his store,
Is like a fair tree which in summer bore
Boughs laden till they crack'd with leaves and fruit,
Whose plenty lasting all men come unto't
And pluck, and fill their laps, and carry away ;
But when the boughs grow bare, and leaves decay,
And the great tree stand sapless, wither'd, dry,
Then each one casts on it a scornful eye.'"

" ' There,' said Tom, clapping me on the back, ' thou wast more than thyself, and even more than *Jacomo Gentile*, such as I thought and wished the character to be.' "

" I believe," said James, " that this speech was remembered to shame me for my unfounded jokes. If so, no more, I pray, for I would not seriously offend. Trust me, father Lowen, though years compel politeness, and force thee to make a bow to time ; and though thy hair turns pale, as dismayed by the changes which it has seen, yet I admire the unfaded

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lustre of the eye which once discoursed in silent eloquence, where Shakspeare and his brethren were present, and the powerful memory and large comprehension, still adhering to thee, make thee a valued relic of former days, and entitled to high praise as a merry evergreen."

The compliment was breathed with sincerity and energy. It was not lost on the old actor. He bowed with an air of satisfaction, but uttered no word, for his heart was full.

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CHAP. XV.

Lowen, though something later than Burbage, is said to have been the first actor of *Hamlet*.

Rise and Progress of the English Theatre.

THE appearance of breakfast induced James to withdraw his attention from Lowen. The mutton and ale were brought in, and he began to give the most satisfactory proofs that his appetite had not been impaired by want of rest; when Robert, who had withdrawn on finding James occupied, returned and addressed him.

"I would know if you will now answer me."

"What do you mean by that?" demanded James. "What is that creditor-look brought here for, as if I had been

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indebted to you such a courtesy these six months? Did I refuse you answer ever?"

"Yes."

"Did I—when? If I did, I suppose it was because your scant speech was ill understood. Why do you not speak fully, and not let your words steal out by ones and twos at a time, sly and cautious, as felons breaking prison?"

"I would have spoken more, but for the dirty rabble of mean foolish phrases poured forth from you to block up my malefactor thoughts (as you would describe them) in their passage."

"Indeed! Then, I doubt not, I saved some of them from having execution done upon them. But what is thy question?"

"It is no question of mine, but comes from my master."

"And what does he desire?"

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"To know where he shall find, with greatest speed, young master Albert."

"Oh! does my honoured godfather desire to see Rhapsody! That is another matter. By the way, I must pay my respects to him the moment he is stirring."

"He has been up, and waiting for your answer to his question more than an hour."

"Marry," cried Lowen, "then I have made no small gap in good manners, not to have sought him sooner."

"Tut; he would not expect you, as he judges you have no fear of his retreating without paying his bill. But as you are shuffling off to bleed your new patient, present my humble duty to Mr. Challoner, and say I desire the honour of an interview."

Lowen left the room, and James, perceiving that Robert stood as expecting

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an answer, began with as much gravity as he could call to his assistance on any ordinary occasion, to speak on the subject of the application which had been made to him."

"I will willingly give all the information in my power, but I am fearful that, doing so, I shall little benefit myself. Think you, when Challoner sees my father he will not strait fall to talking of me?"

"No."

"Why do you judge he will not speak of me?"

"Because he likes not foolish subjects for conversation."

"I understand your civility, but fear your opinion has no reasonable foundation."

"Perhaps not, being bottomed on your conduct."

"But think you he will not recount my doings with these play-house fellows?

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This I am afraid of; for as my father sent me to London to study medicine, and expects by this that I am beginning to act the physician, were he told that I had played first in a tragedy, and then in a droll at the Red Bull, he would be as franticly sad as a hen is after sitting on the eggs of a duck, when she first sees her spoon-billed little ones betaking themselves to the water."

"I think you may dismiss your fears. Master Challoner is too good to feel disposed to say anything about your proceedings to your father."

"Now you are a comforter, Robert. But I fear you flatter me."

"Not much."

"Then you really mean to say, that my godfather is so much pleased with my manner and conversation, that he would be sorry to do any thing that would annoy me ?"

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"No; that was not it. He cares not one farthing about you, but is too humane to speak of anything he has seen of his godson, because he would not like to shock his old friend, your father."

James looked on the tranquil face of Robert with astonishment. The settled composure and apparent sincerity with which he uttered a speech very similar to those in which the party to whom it was addressed frequently indulged, when disposed to mirthful raillery, struck him as extraordinary. He, however, was ingenuous enough to confess that it did him little wrong; and if not pleased with what he had heard, he felt that he had no right to resent it.

Without offering any reply, he directed Robert to apprise his master, that he would speedily supply the information desired. He waited on Challoner, not without some expectation that the com-

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ments of Robert would only prove the prologue to a more serious lecture. But the mind of Challoner was too much occupied with what he had heard on the preceding night to attend to other matters than those which were pressed upon him by the dying words of Lady Maitland. His questions were few, and solely directed to find the means of reaching Albert without delay. The disorder of his mind was such, that while he eagerly listened to what he was told, his thought seemed to bound forward to other matters, and to want capacity to retain in memory the name of the street which he was to seek.

James remarked this confusion, and reminded Lowen that he had been there with him. The actor recalled the circumstance of his having halted at Master Abney's on one occasion when journeying to the Curtain theatre, and

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readily offered his services as guide. By good fortune, he added, the boat in which he, James, and Green had come thither that morning, still remained waiting for the tide to turn, which he calculated it would do by the time they could get to the river.

Challoner at first declined to avail himself of this offer. He wished to proceed to London on horseback, as the quicker way of accomplishing his object; but, informed by Robert that his horse had cast a shoe on the preceding evening, and that he had sent the animal with the one he himself rode to be newly shod, as some delay was unavoidable, he agreed to go by water.

Accompanied by Lowen, Challoner directed his steps towards the place where the boat lay. Challoner stepped in, and assisted the landlord of the Three Pigeons to follow. James bid them adieu,

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but a moment after jumped into the boat, and announced it to be his intention to go with them the greater part of their voyage, though not the whole of it, as he wished to avoid encountering his father till he had done something to please him. This, he said, he could accomplish, by seeking Mr. Lilly, the conjuror, to learn from him how witches might be attacked with safety and effect.

The boat glided swiftly and pleasantly before the tide. Challoner spoke little, but the loquacity of Lowen and James fully made up for taciturnity on his part. When they approached Lambeth, James requested to be put ashore.

"I again bid you adieu, godfather," said he; "and as you will shortly see my own natural and truly-begotten papa, without wishing to fatigue, by soliciting you to apprise him of my last night's toil and this morning's travelling, it

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would, perhaps, not be too much for you to hint, that filial love now carries me to Lambeth, to the house of Old John Tradescant, the gardener, in the hope of finding there the wonder-working Bill Lilly, that I may consult him on the means of tackling the devils and witches which frequent Redburn, to the end that my father's pork may be preserved from all farther peril, by his pigs enjoying good health till they are killed, to be *cured* afterwards."

The boat again proceeded on her way, and London began to open on their view. It was not a partial glimpse through the arches of a bridge which was then obtained from the Thames near Lambeth church, but all the loftiest edifices of the metropolis might be noted, and the many palaces—palaces in all but name, which graced the water's edge.

Suffolk or Northumberland House, as

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it is now called, the original name having been restored, was then not cut off from the Thames, as at present by numerous intervening buildings, but its gardens extended to the river, which was repelled by a strong stone wall, in which some twenty openings appeared to accommodate those who promenaded the grounds with a view of the sports, or other objects of attraction on the water. West of the centre was a door, by which the noble inhabitant was accustomed to pass to his barge, and a small circular tower appeared at the eastern corner of the wall. Nothing besides, interfered with the view of the princely mansion erected on the site of the chapel of Saint Mary Rounceval. York House, then the property of Lord Fairfax, next presented its magnificent front.. This had been erected in the time of James the First, and had now received from time that som-

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bre tone which best becomes such massy erections, while its strength and even the sharpness of its finish remained unimpaired. It was defended by a low indented wall, built of the same material as the house. The main body of the building, beneath which a spacious arcade was seen, connected two noble wings, the fronts of which approached within a few yards of the wall. The eastern wing terminated on a line, or nearly so with that admired specimen of architecture by Inigo Jones, York stairs, which still remains, and which is all that remains of the splendour then witnessed on that spot. The gardens lay eastward, and these conducted the eye to Durham House, Salisbury House, Worcester House, and Somerset House, which successively presented themselves, with all their varieties of grandeur and antiquity. The building last named was

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the palace of the Protector Somerset, altered and in some respects modernised for the reception of Queen Henrietta Maria, by the celebrated architect whose name has already been mentioned. The extended years of Lowen enabled him to point out with precision the changes which had been made in the general appearance of the building, and the scenes which had been acted; in some of which, those of a mimic description, he himself had played a part. It was therefore an interesting spot to him, and he would not have failed to indulge his loquacity on the subject, had not "metal more attractive" engaged his attention, for now, the boat having passed the Temple gardens, they approached Blackfriars, and Bankside, rich in all that could interest an old actor of that century, lay before him.

His eyes glistened while he prepared to direct Challoner's attention to objects

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which he never doubted must strike every one as they did him. He saw *Paris Garden Stairs*, and the lane leading to that once favourite resort of the votaries of pleasure. That, he remarked, was a path which he doubted not his companion like himself had often trodden.

"You, Master Challoner," said he, "I think are old enough to have mingled with the merry gallants, who used to visit *Holland's Leaguer*."

"I have seen the place."

"Seen it!" echoed Lowen, "marry, I should like to know the man who was a man, and in London seven or eight and twenty years ago, (you, though, were almost too young) that had not seen it."

"I remember the moat and the gardens."

"To be sure you do; but as for the mistress, I believe I have the advantage of you there."

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"I have heard her name."

"I warrant you, *Donna Britannica Hollandia*, as we used to call her (Trio juncta in uno) 'the arch mistress of the wicked woman of Eutopia,' is not soon to be forgotten. O the gallant riots that I have seen there, when running warm with the generous wines of the *Falcon*, I, and Ned Alleyn, and his brother-in-law, Henchlowe, used to scamper off to finish the afternoon after play was done. Once I remember Ned, (this was before he thought of building a college at Dulwich,) having been with us at the Globe, sees a buxom wench in the little arbour, in the corner behind the gate-house, and forthwith salutes her very lovingly. Now, mark, I, not an hour before, had met with this same jade, who jilted me while I was chalking out in large comely letters, 'This is the palace of the King,' on a board, which was to be hung up

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for the benefit and edification of all comers to our next day's play, which was Hamlet. While I was thus employed, for I liked not to trust to others what was of such moment, to make those to whom I played know where it was meet to suppose I was, off went the slut to '*Nob's Island*,' so we were wont to call the *Leaguer*. I followed —"

"Nay, Lowen, spare the recital. Your trouble will be in vain, for I cannot listen to such matters at this time."

"Truly, Sir, it appears to me that you are a cup too low. Old as my limbs are, I would propose that we should fetch a walk to the *Falcon*, and taste the liquor, but that you are in such haste."

"Let us not delay; and, trust me, it is not refreshment that can benefit me."

"I fear," said Lowen, "you take things too much to heart. Affairs, no doubt, are sadly changed. The time has been when

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coming down the river thus, Bankside would not have looked as it does now. There would you have seen the flag of the *Swan* flying. That though it was not a play-house which had the best actors, was well to look upon. Then merrily waved the flag of the *Globe*, and the bear-baiting theatre mounted another. By the way, the bearward has his streamer flying now, so that it seems his company of brutes still perform, though men may not show what they can do."

"I do not see the *Globe*," said Challoner, who deemed that at least to be an object worthy of notice.

"Nor could you, even when playing was in its glory, save for a short time after the fire, which cleared some of the houses away, but which are now set up again taller than before; so that were the *Globe* not depressed as it is, you could

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not view it, but its flag might even here be commanded. That, however, I fear me poor Jack Lowen will not live to behold again."

Occupied as he was with other cares, Challoner could not help feeling for the sorrow of the veteran who, looking towards the former haunts of pleasure, to him the unfailing source of profit and renown, could scarcely refrain from tears while he contemplated the altered scene. The mean and neglected appearance of the houses nearest the river, told distinctly of the ruinous change which the zeal of the Puritans had doomed the inhabitants of Bankside to experience. Nothing of the *Swan* could be seen, and the falling and now useless flag-staff of the *Globe*, was all that Lowen could discern of the theatre, where the works of Shakspeare, with their immortal author, had once been admired. He

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turned from the view with emotion, as the boat put in to *Cole-harbour* stairs, on the opposite side of the river, and seemed anxious to give up the recollections in which he had just before wanted Challoner to participate.

They proceeded as fast as the age and weakness of Lowen would admit towards the place where, as he was instructed by James, he might hope to meet Albert.

Great was his regret on arriving in the Old Jewry, to learn that Albert had left about an hour before, to accompany the senior Thorpe to Redburn. He determined immediately to proceed thither, but was not able to execute his intention till the afternoon, through the non-arrival of Robert with the horses. He would have taken a seat in the St. Alban's stage, but was too late; for that, in order that the journey might conclude before night, set off by seven in the morning. The dif-

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ficulty at length removed, he bade adieu to Lowen, and commenced his journey.

It was late in the evening when he reached Redburn. Thorpe and Albert had preceded him but a short time. The former was not a little amazed at the anxious and repeated enquiries for Albert, which assailed his ears from him who till now had been resolute to avoid seeing the youth. A new disappointment awaited Challoner. Albert had left home immediately after their return, and the enquiries made in the neighbourhood where Thorpe considered he was likely to be found, proved fruitless. Two hours were thus consumed, when Challoner stated it to be his intention to repair to a small tenement which he had owned for many years, but which had long been occupied by the man who had brought the flower to him

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at the inn. There he intended to pass the night, but as he thought not of rest, he desired that Albert might be directed to seek him the moment he arrived.

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CHAP. XVI.

O vaine philosophie and bootless artes,
Such seeds of learned ignorance to sow,
Where skille's disgrace, and wisedome's folly grow!
STORER.

IT is necessary that we should account for the absence of Albert. When he reached the abode of Mr. Thorpe, he escaped as quickly as he could from the congratulations and enquiries of Mrs. Thorpe, and retreated towards St. Albans.

His object was to perform a duty imposed upon him by humanity. Knowing how thoroughly convinced Thorpe was, that the miscarriages in his domestic affairs as well as his bodily ailments were occasioned by witchcraft, and knowing also how strong his impression, that

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Dame Neville was the party who practised against him, he was not a little afraid that right, or wrong, his wrath pointing that way, would enable Matthew Hopkins to persecute and torture the unfortunate person he suspected, under the pretence of trying the question of her guilt or innocence.

He therefore resolved to apprize her of what was intended, that she might consult her safety by flight, or prepare to offer such explanation as would serve for a defence.

The night was tremendously stormy, and as he passed through the lonely paths which led to what had now been for a considerable period called by Thorpe and his family, "the witch's cottage;" he could not but recall the wonders which that person, since his interview with Hopkins, had declared himself to have witnessed on the night when, accompa-

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nied by Challoner, he had traversed the same ground.

Though Albert strongly inclined to the opinion that Dame Neville was guiltless, it sprung not from a steadfast belief that crime like that imputed was impossible. At that time absurdities, which could not impose upon children now, were countenanced by such grave authorities, and by facts so strongly attested, that in a young man it required no inconsiderable effort of reason to doubt their truth.

Nor will this excite surprise, when it is remembered, that down even to a later period than the date of this narrative, the most enlightened judges tried, and left for execution, unfortunate persons who were accused of witchcraft. The clear, distinct, and most positive statements made on oath, by those who were witnesses on such trials, and who were

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in many cases persons of unblemished reputation; the reports furnished by men believed to be impartial and intelligent, who had been appointed to investigate cases, in which infernal agency was the subject of complaint, and, more than all, the dying declarations of the bewildered creatures, persecuted into confession, were enough to startle the most sceptical. Albert was sincerely persuaded that Dame Neville had done nothing to merit the punishment which he feared awaited her; but that the tales of witchcraft which he had heard were utterly destitute of foundation, was more than he had ever ventured to assert, however he might wish to believe it.

As he advanced towards the abode of Dame Neville, he frequently paused, and looked round to observe if aught presented itself, which Thorpe or any one

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inclined to yield ready credence in such matters, could regard as confirmatory of the persuasion that supernatural agency was really employed. Albert did this repeatedly, but he did it in vain. Once while his eyes were turned towards the black, broad, and almost interminable line of the abbey, he thought he perceived a human figure descending towards the path he himself was exploring. The glimpse was momentary, and he suspected that fancy, and not vision, had produced the image.

But when he was passing into the last field which he had to cross, he heard a rustling near him, which he was quite sure was not ideal. He remembered what Thorpe had told of the circumstances of his walk in the same direction; he looked towards that part of the hedge from which the sound had seemed to proceed, but could distinguish nothing

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more than the low bank, and the thick bushes which surmounted it. Albert was about to proceed, when a ray of light was thrown full on his countenance.

"Who goes there?" he demanded; and he well remembered that a flash of light was one of the proofs that witches were in motion. No answer was returned; the light had vanished, and he could not, though he listened in breathless silence, hear the slightest movement in the direction from which it had been shown.

After a pause, finding no answer returned to his enquiry, he turned back and walked towards where he judged the bearer of the light must have stood. He went so far as to be enabled to see the bank distinctly, and to perceive that no one was there. The circumstance was singular, but he could easily conceive that some wanderer might

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have passed that way, who, curious to know what sort of being approached, might not care to be questioned himself. Unwilling to give such a trifle further consideration, he resumed his march to the cottage.

Albert now entered Dame Neville's little enclosure. He saw from the casement that a light was still burning in the cottage, but a curtain which descended before it precluded him from seeing more. He heard a dog bark, but not attaching quite so much importance to this salute from Dame Neville's *familiar*, as Thorpe would have done, he gently knocked. A voice within called to some one, and appeared to Albert to announce the arrival. What was said he did not very distinctly hear. The words, "Come at last," were all that he could collect, and from this, connecting it with what had just before surprised him,

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he inferred, with some amazement, that at that late hour another visitor was expected.

The door was opened by Dame Neville herself. She started on perceiving Albert, and tears filled her eyes, while she expressed her wonder at his unlooked-for presence, and bade him welcome.

An aged female, who acted as a servant, placed a chair near the chimney, and introduced a new supply of wood to the fire. Having supported Dame Neville to her chair, Albert seated himself, and began to prepare without delay for the performance of the task which he had undertaken.

"You seem agitated," said he, "by my coming to your dwelling at so late an hour. Pray dismiss apprehension, and do me the justice to believe that my visit is not intended to harm you."

"To harm me?" she repeated, "God

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knows, Albert, I have not entertained so unworthy a thought."

"Then why do you still tremble, and why do your tears flow?"

"Because — because the surprise was too much for me, feeble as I now am. Thus taken at unawares, I could ill sustain the — the — and — I — I expected another person."

"Such being the case, it may be well that I should perform my errand as quickly as possible."

"Not so, it seems long since I saw you. Be not in haste now."

"I cannot with prudence delay. The lateness of the hour, for the abbey clock has tolled nine, must hurry me away; but I could not endure to pass this night without seeing you."

"Has any thing chanced, then, which you would unfold?"

"Much. You may remember, that

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some months since, we talked of your increasing celebrity as a witch. The report has of late still more rapidly gained ground, and attracted in this neighbourhood general notice, and I lament to add, general belief."

"To me, Albert, it matters little what the world say. I am, however, afflicted by the knowledge of that to which you have called my attention. I am sorry for it on account of my poor neighbours. Formerly, they gladly came to receive such little benefits as it was in my power to dispense. The slight knowledge which I have, enabled me to relieve them from hurts, which they occasionally sustained. Now the timid sufferers having been told that I could only heal by unlawful means, are afraid to seek my door. But these follies must soon die away."

"I am afraid not. At present they are on the increase. Farmer Jackson's cart

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stuck in the gateway at the Cross Keys in Hertford town last week, as it was supposed by your contrivance, and could not be by any means removed till he had said the Lord's prayer thrice, which it was supposed broke the charm, and the horse being backed then, it went in as usual. Gaffer Wilkins reports that it was you who caused his pony to take fright last week at South Mimms, which occurred at nightfall, as he tells, in consequence of one of your imps having placed a dead man's skull on a post, with a candle in it, which afterwards, on strict enquiry being made, was turned by the power of the devil into a thing like a turnip, with the inside scooped out, and holes to represent eyes, nose, and mouth cut in the rind."

"It is hard, that a poor lonely woman must be held responsible for the accidents which unskilfulness may occa-

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sion, or for the graceless frolics in which idle boys indulge. Parents, methinks, would not too harshly blame imprudent matches, if they bore in mind all the persecutions to which females who remain single are exposed."

"This, Madam, I have sometimes thought, and have felt indignant when I have seen a female in the bloom of life scoffed at as an old maid, because she had not been so thoughtless as to marry imprudently, or perhaps because untoward circumstances excluded her from all opportunities of becoming a wife."

"The thoughtless world look but at the fact that a female remains unmarried, and this is supposed all-sufficient to prove her a cold, sordid, unsociable being, dead to the kindly feelings of nature, though perhaps, in many cases, were the truth developed, it would be

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found that it was faithful love which doomed a heart true to nature, and generously warm, to pine in solitude.

Albert prepared to reply, when a knock was heard at the door. He remembered the words which had reached his ear as he himself approached; the form, which for a moment he thought he discerned on his way, and the rustling and the light which had caught his attention. Recalling these, he looked with some curiosity for the appearance of the party, to whom the door was now opened.

He saw a female, of about thirty, whose face was not unknown to him. She started at perceiving him, and would have retired, but was encouraged to remain by the voice of Dame Neville, who assured her that she had no cause for alarm, as the young gentleman there was not disposed to injure her or any body else.

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"I humbly pray your pardon, Dame," said the woman, "for not coming to you, so good as you have always been to me, before this time of night; but people say such naughty things, that though I wo'n't believe a word of them, I am afraid of their seeing that I come here. Do you know what they now tell of you?"

"No; nor does it matter at this moment, my good woman."

"Why, John Dobson says, you came into his house last night in the shape of a toad, and he took up the toad and threw it into the fire, when it went bounce, like a great gun, and vanished up the chimbly, where he don't doubt but the devil was waiting with your broomstick for you to ride home."

"The people are strangely infatuated."

"Then there is Mistress Betty Blabit

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is sure that you went to her house like a large tom-cat, but upon her crying out 'Begone, Satan,' you vanished, she says, but first knocked down a bowl of butter milk, which she found you drinking when she came home."

"It is miserable to be thus accused; but no more of this now, good woman. When I am brought before those who are fit to decide in these matters, it will be time enough to reply to such inconceivable follies"

"Very true, Dame," said the woman, "and they are wicked people that tell such fibs; but I can't help it; and you know poor people, who have nothing to depend on but their character—"

"Must guard against all suspicion. This I readily acknowledge."

"So that I hope you will not be angry with me for not coming in the day-time."

"Not at all, my good woman, I but

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wished to give the cloak and hood which I told you should be yours before the coming of winter. There they are, with a few other articles for the use of your family."

The manner in which Dame Neville spoke, though mild in the extreme, indicated something like impatience that her female visitor should retire. She understood it, and prepared to retreat.

"I am vastly beholding to you, I am sure," said the woman, as she turned towards the door, "and will make haste to leave you alone with the young gentleman, and so put on the cloak you have given me when I get outside the door. The young gentleman, I dare say, is not afraid of walking alone, or else he should be welcome to my company, if I waited an hour."

The good natured simplicity with which this was uttered, almost provoked

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a laugh from Albert, who could not but feel, while he looked on the ruddy, smiling, and not ill-favoured countenance of the speaker, that it was very possible to travel with a companion of less attraction.

"You are very good," Dame Neville replied, "but I believe the gentleman does not feel it necessary to crave your protection.—Good night."

The poor woman apologised for the freedom she had used; assured Albert that she meant no harm, and then retired.

"This person," said he, "has brought a melancholy confirmation of what I had before told you. She does not dare to call on her benefactress but when the darkness of night promises to save her from detection. The report is now becoming so prevalent, that in my judgment you will do well to fly from the impending storm."

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"Surely, Albert, flight would be construed to my prejudice."

"I cannot deny it, but it would save your person from peril."

"That is, supposing I am proved guilty."

"No, the preliminary trial is in itself no slight punishment."

"This cannot take place till depositions have been formally made against me on oath."

"But these will soon be forthcoming, I am grieved to add, they are likely to be supplied by a man whom I much respect for his general character, but who believes he has been ruined, and is likely to be destroyed by your machinations."

"Indeed!"

"And further, my coming was to warn you that the cunning man, as he is called, Matthew Hopkins, who has brought so

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many poor creatures to a miserable end, is about to repair hither for the purpose of making enquiries concerning you."

"Let the man come. If he have judgment, which sure he must have, or he would not be so famous; I cannot fear his enquiries."

"Innocence has not always the proofs of integrity at hand, and I therefore give you this warning of what I know to be in progress. I fear your alarm and surprise may be mistaken for guilt, when the meditated enquiry shall begin, and am much disposed to advise that for a season you withdraw."

"That will be taken for a confession of guilt. No — no, I must remain and face my erring pursuers, be the consequences what they may. But my best thanks are due to you," she added, taking him by the hand, on which

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a burning tear descended while she spoke. "You are kind, Albert. God bless you."

He returned her pressure, and while he looked on her distress, experienced unwonted sorrow. Having again urged what he had before recommended, but without effect, he departed.

The most perfect gloom prevailed when Albert commenced retracing the path which had conducted him to the cottage. He had seen nothing in the abode of the supposed witch at all calculated to encourage a belief in supernatural agency, nor did he feel any of those idle apprehensions which at that period disturbed the peace of many a credulous individual, who in the ordinary concerns of life passed for a sensible man; but he felt the darkness and solitude irksome, and it would have been no unpleasant surprise for him, had he found

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the poor woman who had so kindly offered the benefit of her society had waited for him.

He was musing on the unfortunate situation in which Dame Neville stood, when he perceived that he had reached the place to which his attention had been attracted on his way to the cottage. For a moment he paused, a light suddenly flashed on him as before, and he now plainly perceived the figure of a man.

"Who is that?" he loudly demanded.

A deep groan which seemed breathed by one in the last agonies of death was the only answer. The light was shrouded from his view, and the bearer of it could no longer be distinguished from the dense gloom which surrounded him.

Albert was quite satisfied that some one had retreated before him, but much he doubted if the person who fled, and

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the individual who had groaned, were the same. His opinion, indeed, went strongly the other way, for the melancholy sound which he had heard indicated, as he thought, extreme weakness. He questioned the ability of the sufferer to remove, and he lingered some minutes under the impression that a fellow-creature overtaken by some fearful accident, might stand in need of assistance. But his repeated calls produced no reply. Longer to remain seemed useless; and he decided on making the best of his way to Redburn.

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CHAP. XVII.

He shuddered, as he supposed that his own waxen effigy was revolving and melting at the charmed fire; the changes of the sensations told him when wanton cruelty damped the flame, to waste it lingeringly, or roused it in the impatience of revenge.

Retrospective Review.

Thorpe was waking, and somewhat amazed at the absence of Albert. He questioned him respecting his wanderings after nightfall, and expressed some fear that he had been induced to give into the dissipated habits which had often been matter of complaint against James. Albert did not say all he might have urged in his defence, but excused himself in few words; and Thorpe was too eager to impart what he thought good, and not unimportant tidings, to be very minute in his enquiries.

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"Better prospects, young man," said he, "are, I trust, about to open for you; I pray that they may be blasted by no malignant influence as mine have been. Oh! what a throb was that," he exclaimed, wildly starting from his seat.

"What is it disturbs you sir?" enquired Albert.

"The horrid incantations of that devil incarnate, the witch who still persecutes me. I hoped, as I journeyed home, being comparatively easy, that the steps I was about to take, being known to her, had already in some measure intimidated her; but, alas! I again feel the hellish glow of the fire, before which the image of this wretched frame is dissolving."

"Trust me, Sir, I think you deceive yourself. That Dame Neville acts not thus by you, I am sure — that no one else can, I confidently believe."

"It is she — it is she alone. Beware,

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Albert, you, perhaps, are in more danger than I am. Me she persecutes, but you, I half suspect, she hopes to seduce, to become a worshipper of Satan like herself."

"In this you wrong her, Sir, — indeed you do; and for yourself, let me entreat you to seek elsewhere for the true cause of your malady. But what is it you were about to impart?"

"I will endeavour to tell you. The heat is now a little abated, and I can proceed. The benefactor with whose kindness you have long been acquainted, and whose name you have so often implored me to communicate, is no other than my old friend Challoner."

"Indeed! This is grateful intelligence."

"Hitherto he has declined meeting you, but now he is very desirous of your society."

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"Is he here?—Let me fly to him—my preserver—my patron—my more than parent!"

"Moderate your warmth—Good heavens, the pain returns.—Relentless hag!" he cried, meaning to apostrophise Dame Neville as a sudden spasm made him start with agony, "will nothing appease your fury? Torture me still," he added, gnashing his teeth with rage, "but Matthew Hopkins will soon arrive, and then your turn to suffer may come."

And having a little relieved his mind by the vengeance thus breathed, he became more calm. The pain which he endured seemed to abate, and he again addressed Albert to check the impetuous haste with which he was disposed to seek Challoner, and to make him acquainted with some of the peculiarities of his patron. He informed him that the dwelling which he had previously described,

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and which was well known to Albert, had for the last twelve years been inhabited by a poor man of good character, who paid no rent, but who undertook the care of a *rose*, on which Challoner seemed to set a higher value than had ever been set on a *Viceroy*, *Semper Augustus*, or any other tulip, even when the *tulipomania*, as it had been called, was in its very zenith. Beyond this he was not aware that the rustic had any duty to perform, but to tend a small *mountain ash* which was in the garden, and which Challoner regarded with almost as much interest as the rose itself. In the years which had passed since he left that neighbourhood, he had several times been at Redburn, and after looking to the rose he had never failed to enquire into the growth of the mountain ash, and to look to it himself. The interest with which, through so long a period

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he had watched over the flower, and the tree, was a riddle which he could not explain, but such being the case, he cautioned Albert against doing any thing that might ruffle his friend and protector, with respect to either, as in some instances he had known him to be as violent and indignant, as in general he was indulgent and humane."

Albert expressed his thanks for the information thus communicated, and prepared to seek Challoner. He left Thorpe, and in a few moments found himself at the door of the rural abode to which he had been invited and directed.

On knocking, he was instantly admitted by the man who had been mentioned as constantly residing there. He spoke not, but to tell Albert that he had been impatiently expected. The latter passed up stairs and approached an apartment,

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the door of which stood open. Albert saw Challoner, and could not help being struck with his disordered air and strange appearance. He was seated at a table, on which the rose which had been mentioned was placed. His left arm encircled the flower which he seemed to caress, and his attention was so entirely engrossed by that, or by what was passing in his mind, that though Albert purposely made some noise to announce his coming, Challoner remained unconscious that he had ceased to be alone.

Suddenly he left the seat which he had occupied, and paced the room with hasty steps, but without looking round.

"Poor victim," he sighed, and while speaking he raised his hand to remove a tear which trembled on his eyelid. It was in that moment that he recognised

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Albert, and sprung forward to embrace him.

"No prostration," he cried, perceiving Albert about to kneel. "You imagine that you owe me gratitude; I feel that reproach would not be ill bestowed. But so far as you are concerned, I hope to atone for the past. You have become dearer to me than you can by possibility surmise. To promote your happiness will henceforth be among the objects which I have most at heart."

"For the past," said Albert, "I would offer the humblest, warmest thanks of a sincerely grateful bosom."

"Speak not thus. I have wronged you, boy, through life. A frightful error has made me negligent of the dearest charge ever given to man."

Albert looked with unspeakable amazement on his patron. This self-reproach struck him as so utterly at variance with

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the truth, that he almost doubted his own senses, and could scarcely believe that he had heard correctly.

"Pardon me, Sir," he said, "but I am tempted to controvert that assertion."

"Your gratitude is my reproach. But my speech seems incoherent. In truth, I am too much agitated at present to explain, or longer to look on you whom I have so much coveted to see. Refreshments and a bed are provided in the next room; leave me now, Albert. It may appear strange that I should ask you to retire so soon, but repress curiosity till the morning; then I hope to be more myself. Very lately I spoke that which I know must have given you pain. Consider it unsaid. Circumstances are no longer the same, and Celia Lesley shall be yours. Thus much I deem it right to state now. I could not endure to pass

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a single night without doing it. Now retire to indulge in dreams of happiness, soon I trust to be realised."

With these words he folded the youth affectionately to his bosom. He then waved his hand for Albert to withdraw. The signal was obeyed.

Albert found a variety of refreshments prepared for him, but the kind care was useless. He was not disposed to eat, for the strangely varied circumstances of the night pressed too strongly on his imagination to leave him sensible of the ordinary claims of nature. The altered tone of Challoner with respect to Celia, invited the most blissful anticipations, but these could not be indulged but in the company of an excruciating curiosity, which panted to know what important event could have produced a change not less fortunate than it was extraordinary.

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But, at all events, he had a right to exult in the altered situation of his affairs, and he felt disposed to surrender himself up to the pleasurable glow which this conviction was calculated to produce, when the melancholy circumstances in which Dame Neville was placed, presented themselves to his mind. Close on the recollection of her danger pressed that of what he had heard and seen on his way from her cottage. The man he had perceived might be a lurking assassin; — the groan which he had heard that of a dying victim. While it yet rung in his ear he had made, as it appeared to him, all reasonable exertion to discover whence it came, but he now regretted that he had not done more.

Pursuing that train of ideas which naturally sprung from the incidents of the night, he next reviewed, with some surprise, what Thorpe had deemed it neces-

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sary to tell him of the impetuous character of Challoner, and especially the singular tenure by which it appeared an individual had, through many years, kept possession of the tenement of which he was then an inmate. That a *rose tree* and a *mountain ash*, however beautiful in their season, should thus occupy the attention of a man who, for years, had been an exile from England, and who was little disposed to indulge in trifling and fanciful amusements, appeared strange. He had heard of eccentric flights of fancy, for which no reasoning could account, and these seemed to be of their number.

Though he had been expected by Challoner, Albert had remarked that his air and general appearance wore not that aspect of composure which he had previously remarked as his distinguish-

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ing characteristic. The words which had fallen from him while he was unconscious that any one was within hearing, were remarkable:

"Poor victim!" he had heard him distinctly exclaim. To whom would this apply? For a moment the recollection of the groan again intruded. But this he repelled, as connected with something like ingratitude, which could thus, even in thought, sin against so generous, so constant a benefactor as he had found in Challoner.

He felt satisfied that he had quite dismissed the injurious idea; but though he had now divested himself of his clothes, and rested on the bed prepared for him, it was in vain that he courted sleep. Forgetfulness was more than once stealing over him, when something which had struck him as extraordinary in

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the course of the night occurred to him, and he started from his pillow as restless as ever.

Thus miserably writhing, tortured by a variety of thoughts, yet incapable of thinking on any thing with steadiness, he listened to every sound that occasionally broke in upon the general stillness. The wind rustling among the neighbouring trees, the barking of a dog at some distance, and the pattering of the rain against the casement, were all that had caught his attention for hours, when he thought he heard a slight noise, different from any he had previously noticed. To him it seemed to be that of a person digging. Again his thoughts travelled back to the spot near which he was almost persuaded that he had heard the last groan of an expiring fellow-creature, and again he checked

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himself; and mentally reproved the feverish weakness which thus sought to connect every object and every sound with that which had startled and astonished him.

He wished to believe that he was in error altogether, and that no such noise as he had last imagined had in reality struck upon his ear, when he heard anew what had before arrested his attention more distinctly than ever. To doubt that some one was digging, and in the garden of the cottage, was absolutely impossible. He rose from his bed, approached the window of the chamber, and partially removed the curtain. Dark as it was, he could see a man occupied with a spade, which he used with extreme caution, as if fearful of being overheard. Who it was that thus laboured Albert could not determine, and was at a loss to

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divine. In height and figure the individual resembled Challoner. That he should work there at all, and especially at that hour, and in such unfavourable weather, were circumstances so utterly improbable, that Albert could not believe it was really his patron. But he was equally at a loss to guess why any one else should come there, to do that which he plainly discovered somebody to be doing. If he found it difficult to decide who the person could be that was thus engaged, he was not less puzzled to judge of the immediate object of the individual.

He was careful to hold the curtain so that his own person should not be seen. This precaution was not wholly unnecessary, for he remarked the person in the garden frequently looked round, as if to discover whether he was observed. He

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persevered in his toil for more than an hour, and repeatedly descended into the hole which he had dug. Albert could not see that he had deposited any thing in it, when it seemed to him that it was being filled up. A moderate time sufficed to complete this part of the task, and the operator retired.

Bewildered and amazed, Albert thought of betaking himself to his bed, when a momentary flash of light, like that which had been directed towards his own countenance when going to and coming from Dame Neville's, filled him with new amazement. He heard a step softly ascending the stairs, and some one passed into the next room. That this was Challoner he had no reason to doubt, but it was almost his determination to demand who approached, when the necessity for doing so was removed by the

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opening of his door, and the entrance of Challoner.

"How is this, young man," said Challoner, "that you are not sleeping, and not even in bed?"

"I have been in bed," Albert replied, "but finding myself feverish and wakeful, I arose for a time, but am about betaking myself to my couch again."

"I will not detain you from it; but I wished to ascertain if you were waking. Tell me, has any thing extraordinary been forced on your attention?"

The question was too direct to be evaded; and Albert, after a pause, replied, "I have seen some one digging in the garden."

"I suspected as much. Well, it matters not. To you the cause of this will not long be a secret. We will not speak on the subject now; but, lest any thing

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should prevent me from recurring to it immediately, till I shall have done so, let me conjure you to preserve the most inviolable secrecy."

Challoner then withdrew.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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